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FURTHER
REMINISCENCES OF
A SOUTH AFRICAN
PIONEER

W. C. SCULLY



**FURTHER REMINISCENCES OF A
SOUTH AFRICAN PIONEER**

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TO VINU ALPOTUAO



Photo by

TABLE MOUNTAIN. SPREAD OF THE "TABLE-CLOTH."

[Coima• Wöcke.

Frontispiece

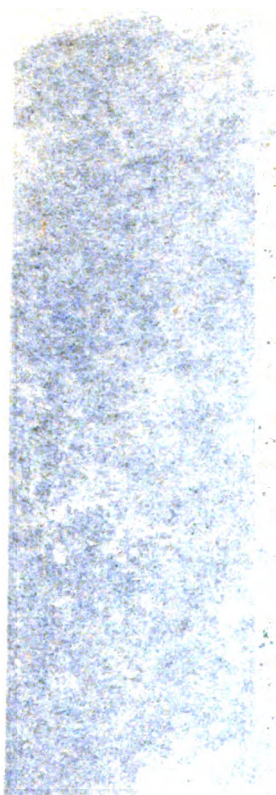
MY REMINISCENCES
OF A
NATIVE AFRICAN PIONEER

BY
JAMES CHARLES MULLY

AUTHOR OF
"BETWEEN SUN AND SAND," "KATIR STORIES,"
"BY VELD AND KOPIE," ETC., ETC.

WITH 16 ILLUSTRATIONS

T. FISHER UNWIN
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LEIPSIC: INSELSTRASSE 20



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First published in 1913

TO VINI
ABSORBIO .

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TO THAT BODY
OF WHICH I WAS ONCE THE JUNIOR,
BUT OF WHICH I AM NOW, ALAS ! PROBABLY
THE SENIOR MEMBER—
THE CIVIL SERVICE OF THE CAPE PROVINCE,
SOUTH AFRICA—
THIS BOOK IS INSCRIBED

FOREWORD

THE readers of my first series of "Reminiscences" may recall that at their close I stated my intention of not proceeding with the second series until after leaving the Civil Service. Two considerations have induced me to alter this decision. The first was that I found it would be necessary to write a third series as well, for my extended notes became too bulky for a single volume. The other was the flattering reception accorded the first series. I have accordingly included in the present work only my recollections for the period from 1876 to 1899—the fateful year of the War. The third series will, I trust, appear in due course. It will cover the period which includes the War, the Settlement, and the birth of Union.

Readers of the first series may also remember that the latter ceased at the period of my entry into the Civil Service, after seven years of wandering and adventure. The present work

Foreword

will, I trust, be of some interest. It deals with phases of South African life which hitherto have scarcely been touched by literature. My life during the years to which it relates was mainly spent within sight of the parish pump, so the things related must, perforce, be mainly of the small-beer order. In this mixture of metaphors I intend no reflection upon the brewers.

But life is life, whether spent in the city or in the hamlet, and it is those who dwell in the vicinity of the parish pump who, after all, sway the destinies of the nation in the last resort.

AUTHORS' CLUB,
2, WHITEHALL COURT, S.W.
May, 1918.

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Further Reminiscences of a South African Pioneer

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AFTER realizing that I actually belonged to the Civil Service—that body the members of which I had admired from a distance and looked upon with a certain amount of awe—I was seized with a fearful curiosity as to the nature of my duties. Accordingly—but with considerable diffidence—I called upon the Chief Clerk to the Civil Commissioner and Resident Magistrate of East London at his office. Thus I was introduced to Mr. Charles Haw, who was then

Further Reminiscences of a

awaiting promotion. He has since retired and is now lord of many morgen in the district of George, on the South Coast. I asked him to let me look at his books; he produced them, and my heart almost turned to water. Tome after ponderous tome was examined, and, as it were, piled like the stones of a mausoleum over my defunct courage. The ordered complication of the columned figures in the cash books, the cryptic references to Acts of Parliament in the books in which civil and criminal cases were recorded, filled my inexperienced mind with despair. How could I ever hope to master so complicated a system? However, I had burnt my boats—or rather cut myself off irrevocably from the Boating Company. So I dragged my courage from its sepulchre, galvanized it into something resembling life, and drew an advance to cover the expense of travelling to Tarkastad.

With the exception of a short line leading towards the Midlands from Port Elizabeth, there were no railways in the Eastern Province of the Cape Colony in those days, so I had to arrange to reach my destination by travelling from town to town by post-cart, thus taking a very zigzag route. It was on the 22nd of May, 1876, that I left East London in the post-cart

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for King William's Town. Next day I purchased an outfit of clothes. This had to be effected on credit—a process attended with some difficulty, for my sumptuary condition was not such as to inspire confidence on the part of shopkeepers. Indeed, had it not been that a Good Samaritan guaranteed my account I do not know how I should have managed. However, all difficulties being removed, I soon shed the chrysalis-crust of my dilapidated nautical garb, and, in my own conceit, almost rivalled the lilies of the field; rather, perhaps, should I have compared myself to the butterflies that woo them.

A friend of my family happened to be proceeding next day to Fort Beaufort in his cart, so he offered me a seat. On the evening of our arrival a dance was held in honour of the Queen's birthday. My companion being well known, I was honoured with an invitation. There were many charming girls present, but men were scarce; consequently my very serious shortcomings as a dancer were condoned. I enjoyed myself, even if my partners did not. I vividly remember three of the latter. They are all, I am glad to say, still alive—some are, indeed, grandmothers.

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From Fort Beaufort I next day took the post-cart for Queenstown. The road led up the lovely Kat River Valley and over the Katberg Pass. At that time the magnificent forest which filled the gorges and clothed the slopes of the mountain had not been destroyed, so the Pass afforded some of the finest scenery in South Africa. Just on the other side of the summit was a small wayside inn, in which we spent the night. Soon after we arrived a heavy bank of cloud rolled in from the sea. Next morning the Katberg, the Great Winterberg which towered aloft a few miles to the southward, and all the subsidiary ranges, were thickly covered with snow. Soon after dawn we made a start. I had no overcoat, so the drive to Queenstown was a bitter experience. Had it not been for an old horse-blanket which the good-natured hotel-keeper lent me, I think I must have perished.

From Queenstown one day's travelling took me to Tarkastad. On the following morning, the 28th of May, I reported myself to the Resident Magistrate. He suggested my not assuming duty until the 1st of June, and I was ill-advised enough to consent to this. Twelve years afterwards this circumstance cost me my promotion. A

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vacancy occurred ; in respect of this the claims of another man and myself were under consideration. As the former's services counted from the 29th of May, 1876, he was given the post.

The village of Tarkastad—I believe it has now grown into a town—lay about thirty miles to the north-westward of the Great Winterberg Range, and stood on an elevated plain flanked by lofty mountains—grass-clothed and crowned, usually, with sheer turrets of rock. With the exception of occasional groves of mimosa-trees, the country was almost without boskage. Many of the mountains were splendid examples of that table formation so characteristic of South African scenery. Such mountains often stand several thousand feet above the plains lying between them, their level summits reaching about the same height. This seems to indicate that at one time the whole country was on the level of the lofty tables, and that the enormous spaces now existing between these were scooped out during incalculably long denudation periods.

The line dividing the grass-veld from the Karroo ran through the centre of the district, and, in fact, through the township. In 1876 the latter might have contained some four

Further Reminiscences of a

hundred European inhabitants, about three-fourths of whom were Dutch. Water was plentiful, and there were many fertile gardens. The leading people of the village were kind and hospitable. Tarkastad was, in several important respects, a favourable specimen of its class of community.

In the days I write of every South African village had an individuality of its own. The average inhabitant was born, married, and died within the bounds of the district. Life was quiet and uneventful, but healthful for mind and body and full of peace. Now, however, the northern developments—more especially in the Transvaal and Rhodesia—have drawn away the more adventurous and energetic spirits, and a drab dullness reigns in every dorp.

The village contained about half a dozen stores and two hotels. Every one did a roaring trade, for the district was a rich one, all kinds of farming being successfully followed. A great deal of drinking went on among the villagers. On Saturday nights gilded youth and frisky middle-age used to congregate at the respective hotels and hold high wassail. This sort of thing was by no means restricted to Saturday, for the birthday of any one of the

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boon companions was invariably made the occasion of conviviality. When human birthdays lay too far apart, that of Dr. Everitt's bulldog used to be celebrated. Had each of this animal's reputed birthdays indicated a year in his lifetime, he would have been a patriarch indeed, for the auspicious event used to be commemorated every few months at least. Pincher, decked in bravery of blue ribbons, would then be enthroned on a high packing-case in the billiard-room at Robinson's Hotel, and there fed on gobbets of meat. The guest of the evening entered thoroughly into the spirit of the entertainment, long usage having taught him what to expect in the matter of gobbets on these occasions, and he would grunt and wag his scut ecstatically every time his health was drunk.

The functions of the magistrate were confined almost solely to the trying of cases. There was no revenue except from fines—usually for drunkenness or contraventions on the part of Natives of the Pass Laws. Consequently there was little or no work to do. This fortunate circumstance gave me a much-needed opportunity of supplying my educational deficiencies. I acquired an English grammar, a dictionary,

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and a copy-book. Late at night and secretly, for I was morbidly anxious to conceal my ignorance, I worked hard at my lessons. Soon I discarded the grammar in despair, but by closely reading the Bible and Shakespeare I found I was making fair progress.

But to my extreme distress, after a few months had elapsed, I discovered that I was almost an absolute stranger in the community. My experience was a curious one. At first people treated me with friendliness; then they would rebuff me. At the time this puzzled me, but I think I now know the reason. Man is essentially a gregarious animal and resents, without knowing why, any aberration from his type. My experiences had made me different from those among whom I lived, and, quite involuntarily, they disliked me.

I longed for human companionship, but could find none. I tried to join in the birthday or Saturday-night sprees, but, although not then a teetotaler, I never could bring myself to drink more than one glass of grog in the course of an evening. It became clear to me that my presence at such gatherings was resented, so I ceased to attend them. I was like the old Greek who went sober to

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a feast, and was accused by everybody there of being objectionably drunk.

I well remember walking home in the small hours with one of these revellers, an elderly man with a wife and family. I brought him to the door of his dwelling, where he kept me, talking, for a few minutes. Then two other revellers arrived, and, excited by some suggestion one of them made, my companion stated his intention of pulling down the veranda of his own house. This idea met with the applause of the others. I vainly remonstrated; the three lunatics went to work and began dismantling the veranda, which had a trellis over which roses had been trained. I lit my pipe, sat on a rustic seat, and looked on, wondering at the vagaries of which human nature was capable. Suddenly the door was thrown open and the lady of the house appeared. At once the work of destruction ceased. The owner of the premises collapsed in a pitiful way; the other two fled up the street. On me Mrs. R. poured forth the vials of her scorching wrath. I tried hard to enlighten her as to the facts of the case, but she would not listen to reason. I am firmly persuaded that had I not been sober she would not have been nearly so

Further Reminiscences of a

indignant. I took off my hat, made my best bow, and retreated, leaving the dame fully persuaded that I was the guilty party and that her husband's misconduct was due to his yielding to my insidious wiles. It was many months before she would again speak to me. I am certain that her husband played up to her idea, and sheltered himself behind me.

This episode added to the general dislike of which I appeared to be the object. This dislike was manifested in a number of more or less palpable ways, but was quite unmistakable. The situation got quite beyond me; my varied experiences gave me no clue towards its betterment. For years past I had been dealing with the sternest realities of life; I had been face to face with danger in various forms, and the discipline I had undergone was searching and severe. I had had to grapple with almost elemental forces, to fight battles in which the mere doubtful grace of survival was the only prize of victory. But all this had left me utterly ignorant of the amenities of any communal life except that of the strenuous fabric of which I had been such an insignificant strand. And this community was so utterly different; its members seemed to be

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steeped in triviality and unreason. Nevertheless, I longed with all my soul to be on friendly terms with those among whom I lived. But the more I strove in this direction the more cruelly I was rebuffed.

I am dwelling on my subjective misery, because I think that all genuine suffering of this class is of general interest. In those dark days I often longed passionately for the old, hard life, and bitterly regretted having left it. Had it not been for family considerations, I would have packed my swag and tramped back to the northern Transvaal. At night I would lie awake for hours, revisualizing the camp fire, the white tents scattered like petals along the lovely Pilgrim's Valley, or the forest glade quivering to the earth-shaking rush of a herd of buffaloes. In my ear sounded the rumbling voice of the lion, the mingled wailing and laughter of the hyena's cry. This would change to the thudding of the pickaxes, the rattling of the gravel over the ripples of the sluice-box, or the shock of the blasting charge.

I felt like a wild hawk penned in a poultry yard, with talons clipped—exposed to the peckings of a lot of corn-fed roosters. Sometimes I would wander forth at night to some lonely

Further Reminiscences of a

hillside and breathe a message for the streaming south wind to bear to the distant mountain land I loved so well, for all that it had treated me so unkindly. I often hummed to myself the old song of the gold-digger, the refrain of which runs :—

“For he loves the sound of the windlass
And the cry of ‘Look out below.’”

I became more and more solitary in my habits, my only friends being among the farmers, who, however, only occasionally visited the village. There was one exception to the rule of general dislike in which I appeared to be held. This was a Scotch tailor named Menteith, who was a somewhat remarkable man. Menteith was well read, intelligent, and full of sympathetic insight; moreover, he had all the instincts of a gentleman. But his weakness was intemperance; drink he could not keep away from. Consequently his life was a miserable one.

I boarded in a private household but had nothing in common with any of its members. Owing to a domestic complication it became necessary for me to take my meals elsewhere during December, so I arranged to stay at

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Robinson's Hotel. This was, of course, venturing into the stronghold of the enemy; but I had no choice. As the Christmas holidays approached, the ill-natured pleasantries of the gilded youth became less restrained; accordingly, I was subjected to a systematic persecution. I became a butt for insulting witticisms and offensive practical jokes. All this soon culminated in something more serious. On the morning of the last day of the year Menteith told me that it had been determined to give me a thrashing, and that a certain M., the chief among my persecutors, had been selected to perform the operation in an appropriate and dramatic manner.

Shortly after my interview with Menteith a note from the proprietor of the hotel reached me. This contained a formal invitation to join the company "in good fellowship" that evening, so as to assist in celebrating the advent of the New Year. I had for some little time carefully avoided all social gatherings. Here, I thought, was the olive-branch.

I showed the note to Menteith, and he at once declared that it meant treachery; that my castigation had been determined on, and that the invitation was a ruse to entice me to my

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undoing. In spite of the certitude expressed by my friend I had great difficulty in believing his view to be correct. I decided, however, to accept the invitation and thus bring matters to a head. The situation was an intolerable one and had to be ended, one way or another, at any cost. I extracted a promise from Menteith to the effect that he would remain in the vicinity of the hotel and that he would keep sober. This promise he loyally kept.

In the afternoon I went for a long, solitary walk, and considered the situation carefully in all its bearings. My prospects did not seem hopeful; I could scarcely expect to be able to thrash M., who was a very powerful man. I knew that if he once got a grip of me I would probably be crushed like an egg. But M. did not appear to be very alert in his movements; besides, there had been a good deal of dissipation in his life; he could hardly be in first-rate condition. I, on the other hand, although extremely slight, and not built for strength in any way, was quite extraordinarily hard. Endurance was my best quality; my wind was very good indeed. Besides, I was lightning-quick on my feet. So far I had been pugilistically unfortunate; on nearly every occasion when I

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had been cornered and forced to fight, the battle had gone against me. However, I reflected, the bolder course is often the wiser, so I made up my mind to fight cunningly, do my level best, and give M. a run for his money. At the worst I could only get a thrashing. I had my month's salary in my pocket and the road was open.

In the evening Menteith and I went for a stroll. He had been a good boxer in his day ; he gave me various tips, urging most earnestly that I should, early in the fight, devote all my energies to tiring out my opponent. Eleven o'clock had just struck when I entered the hotel, leaving Menteith outside. The usual company had assembled in the big room next to the bar. I was welcomed with a show of friendliness and offered refreshment, which I accepted. Most of those present showed signs of liquor, but none were intoxicated. M. was sitting near the fireplace ; I noticed that he was unusually silent, and that he occasionally sent furtive glances in my direction. Anon I saw him, thinking himself unobserved, throwing his liquor away in the grate instead of drinking it. I placed my glass on a vacant chair next to where I was sitting ; each time it was filled I managed, unobserved, to spill most of

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the contents on the floor. M. kept quite silent ; every time I caught his eye I read hatred in it. I knew now for a certainty that Menteith had been right in his forecast, and that the crisis was at hand.

Twelve o'clock struck and we all drank to the New Year. Shortly afterwards I arose, asked the landlord to excuse me, passed the compliments of the season to the company and moved towards the door. As I expected, M. stood up and advanced towards me. We met face to face. Then he called me by a most foully insulting name.

"All right," I said, "come outside."

A full moon was shining ; not a breath of wind stirred. The houses on each side of the gleaming street looked like a double row of tombs. The space before the hotel was wide and smooth. The faithful Menteith was on guard ; he took charge of my coat, waistcoat, and hat ; these he put in a place of safety. The company, which had streamed out of the hotel, formed a ring. A dark figure emerged from a lane and stood about thirty yards away ; I recognized this as a native policeman. One of the company walked over to him and I heard the chink of coins ; the policeman disappeared. I was glad,

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for I wanted no interference. M. and I took our places in the ring and the fight began. I fully expected to get a severe mauling, but was determined, if I had to die for it, to hurt my man.

The engagement opened with a series of buffalo-rushes on the part of M., all of which I avoided without much difficulty. My adversary soon commenced to puff heavily, so I began to acquire something like confidence. Up to this I had not struck a single blow. After each round Menteith was almost hysterical in his congratulations upon my tactics. At length M. made a particularly vicious rush, in the course of which he followed me twice completely round the ring. Then I rallied, got over his guard and planted four stinging blows on his nose in quick succession. This made my opponent furious, but the greater his fury the more he laid himself open to my now continuous attack. When "time" was called M. showed signs of severe punishment.

I now felt that the game was more or less in my hands. M. grew wilder and wilder in his attacks; I hovered round him like a stinging gnat. Once I dropped under his arm as he delivered a tremendous lunge, recovered as he

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passed me, and gave him a blow at the butt of the ear which felled him like a log. I now wanted to stop the fight, but M. would not give in. Under ordinary circumstances he would, no doubt, have done so, but it was evident that he could not endure the disgrace incidental to being thrashed by one who had for so long been looked upon as a person of no account.

It is strange how quickly a more or less civilized man can be turned into a brute. Until near the end of the fight I felt little or no animosity towards my opponent ; in fact, I deeply regretted the necessity of punishing him so severely. When I had him, as I supposed, thoroughly worn down, I grappled, thinking that one heavy thud on the ground might finish his wind and prevent his rising when "time" came to be called again. But I soon realized what a mistake I had made, for when M. got a grip of me I was like a rag doll in his powerful arms. We went down, he on top, and I felt all the breath being forced out of my body. Then he began to pound at my face. But Menteith was at him like a tiger and pulled him off before he could do much damage. It was then that I became a savage ; the unfairness of hitting me when on the ground seemed to haul some Berserk

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ancestor out of his thousand-year-old tumulus and to fill me with his spirit. From then to the end of the fight I was a murderer in intent. During those baleful minutes I remembered every slight that M. had ever put upon me. The hour of my vengeance had come and I used it. After knocking my unhappy adversary's features almost out of human semblance I seized and flung him to the ground. Time was called, his seconds tried to revive him, but he lay absolutely inert.

We had fought for upwards of three-quarters of an hour. When the struggle came to an end only Menteith and two of M.'s friends were present. All the others had sneaked off when they saw their champion fall into such sorry case. With knuckles skinned and every muscle aching, I went home to bed. A bad reaction set in; my triumph seemed to have turned to dust and ashes. Who is that has said "There is nothing sadder than a victory, save a defeat."

It was long before I fell into a troubled sleep. Soon after daybreak I was awakened by a thundering knock at my door, which opened on the street. Upon answering the summons my eyes fell on the scared visage of a policeman, who had a blood-stained shirt-sleeve in his hand.

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This had been torn off at the shoulder during the fight; my name was marked on the cuff. The gruesome object had been picked up by Mrs. Barker's servant-girl, who took it to her mistress. The latter sent it to the police. The report had got abroad that I had been murdered. I looked through my window and saw people hurrying towards the house from several directions.

I was in a miserable condition; my arms were black and blue from guarding the sledge-hammer blows. So stiff was I that movement of any kind caused severe pain. But with the exception of two lumps on my forehead—the result of the foul blows received while on the ground—my face was unmarked. Nevertheless, I was really ill from the overstrain; I felt as though I had been passed through a threshing machine.

In the afternoon I heard that M. was in a bad way. It was unfortunate that Dr. Everitt, the only medical practitioner, was absent, and was not expected to return for several days. Next day M. was reported to be in a serious condition, so an express was sent to fetch a doctor from Queenstown, forty miles away. There was no telegraphic communication between Tarkastad and the outside world in those days. In the evening I went to see the injured man. He

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was lying breathing stertorously ; his face was indescribably horrible to behold. I was filled with the utmost dismay, for it was evident that incipient blood-poisoning had set in. However, the doctor arrived during the night and was able to afford him some relief. But it was several weeks before he recovered.

My chief, Mr. "Tommy" Gie—although he severely pitched into me in private—protected me from what might have been serious official consequences. He knew quite well the provocation I had received. The fight had a curious sequel. M. was postmaster and likewise a dealer in ammunition. He had borrowed money from the postal safe to pay for a consignment of cartridges, so when his office was examined by the magistrate the shortage was discovered. There was no dishonesty involved, for he would undoubtedly have paid the money back. Still, a decided irregularity had occurred, and when the matter was reported to the Postmaster-General, M. lost his appointment. No other suitable person being available, the office was conferred upon me. This was elementary and dramatic justice with a vengeance. I had routed my foe and despoiled him of his skin. M. took the misfortune like a sportsman ; so far as I could judge

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he never bore me the slightest malice. The post-office emoluments, £36 per annum, proved a most welcome addition to my slender income.

But the most satisfactory result of my adventure was that my relations with the rest of the community at once improved. In fact, if one might judge by appearances, I became the most popular individual in the place. At once I began to enjoy life. My increased resources enabled me to acquire a pony and a rifle. The district teemed with game. Red and "vaal" rhebuck were to be found on the mountains in troops of fifty and sixty, and there were large troops of springbuck on several of the farms. There was next to nothing to do in the office and my chief was partial to venison. In the seventies the Game Law was a dead letter; no close season was observed. It was my habit to leave the village several times a week a few hours before daybreak, and I usually returned in the middle of the forenoon driving my pony, laden with two or three fine buck, before me. During such periods of absence Mr. Gie would issue letters and sell postage stamps on my behalf. We were very unconventional in those days.

My favourite hunting-ground was a lofty mountain range which arose from the western margin

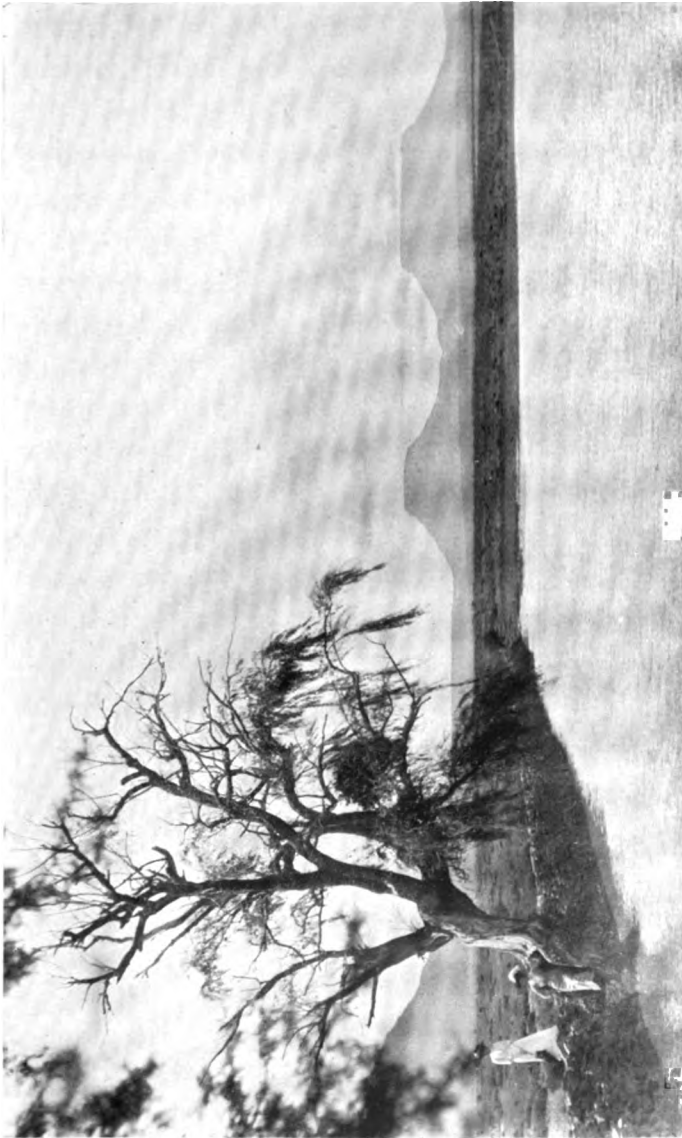


Photo by]

THE "TWO-TABLE" MOUNTAINS, NEAR TARKASTAD.

[Carville Bros., King William's Town.

To face p. 40.

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of the immense basin known as "Schaapkraal's Hoek." This range was crowned by a series of high, sheer rock-buttresses. Between these were saddle-shaped passes through which troops of buck used to move from the western flanks of the range to meet the rising sun. It was my habit to leave the pony concealed in some hollow, and station myself, before day had broken, on some pinnacle commanding one or other of the passes. Here I would lie and watch the east grow glorious. When the direction of the wind permitted I smoked a peaceful pipe in the golden morning air. When the bucks appeared I would knock over the largest. Often I secured two more before the troop got out of range.

For purposes of sport I had practically the run of every farm in the district, with the exception of one. This belonged to an old curmudgeon named Ludovic Hattingh; it filled one side of the great Schaapkraal basin. Old Hattingh, who was at loggerheads with all his neighbours, flatly refused me permission to shoot. Once I pursued a wounded buck into his veld and there killed it. Next issue of the *Tarka Herald*, our weekly newspaper, contained a notice in large type warning me by name never to set foot on his land again.

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But Hattingh's warning failed of its purpose. There was a large herd of springbucks which ranged indifferently over his veld and that of Jan Marais, his neighbour, and the boundary-line was unfenced. I found out that it was the habit of these bucks to graze into Marais's veld at night and return to sanctuary just before day-break. So I would saddle up soon after midnight, ride out and steal down the boundary-line in the darkness. Thus it was easy to stampede the herd deep into the veld where I had permission to shoot. After the light had sufficiently grown, I would enjoy my sport. Hattingh was much enraged when he discovered my ruse, but he was powerless to prevent its exercise.

CHAPTER II

The *Tarka Herald*—A race of giants—"‘Ou’ Sias" and his descendants—Large families—Mr. Klopper’s coffin—A bulky lady—Botha and the sausages—The lot of a Civil servant—His insignificance—His poverty and his difficulties—John Barker—"The Baron" and *Yom Kippur*—Curious adventure with partridges—A good shooting record—Sale of guns to natives—Promotion to Graaff Reinet—Outbreak of war.

THE *Tarka Herald* was a quaint production. Its editor-proprietor-compositor was Sam Dowdle, a man of wasted gifts. There being no telegraph line to Tarkastad, the literary columns of the *Herald* contained little beyond local personalities and reports of blood-curdling murders culled from the English journals. Occasionally—usually when a series of birthdays had fallen in rapid succession—the publication might cease for several weeks. Then a half-sheet would appear containing an apology. I recall the terms of one excuse for a particularly long blank period. The circumstance urged in favour of consideration

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was this—that the printer's devil had been on a visit to his relations.

The Tarka farmers, both English and Dutch—the latter largely predominating—were the finest yeomen it has ever been my fortune to meet. They were literally a race of giants ; 6 feet 6 inches was no uncommon height for a man to attain, and as a rule they were splendidly built. Among the English the principal names were Macdonald, Frost, Whitehead, and Goddard. Of the Dutch the de Wets, Venters, Marais, Hattinghs, Bothas, and especially the Van Heerdens, were most prominent. The district contained many specimens of that admirable class which is now so rapidly passing away : the patriarchal, unsophisticated Boer who holds fast to the traditions of rectitude, piety, and hospitality. Excellent examples were old Piet du Plessis, "Sias" de Wet, and Mr. Piet Hattingh, of Roets Hoek. They were all lords of immense tracts of land ; they owned countless flocks and herds. At each homestead was a chamber kept exclusively for guests ; every reputable visitor was royally entertained, and I am certain that even the disreputable one was seldom sent away empty.

"Ou' Sias" de Wet, who was upwards of ninety years of age, lived in the village, and

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received reports from his various large farms. In spite of his advanced age, Mr. de Wet was able to keep the complicated details of the working of each farm in his head. It was like one of the great chess-players carrying on several games at once without ever seeing the boards.

"Ou' Sias" had, I think, been married four times. I know that he fathered three large families. The name "Sias" (Josias) was to be found in every family of his grandchildren, and as the name of de Wet was not uncommon it became necessary to distinguish one "Sias" from another. Thus you would hear of "Ou' Sias' Jan's Sias," or "Ou' Sias' Piet's Hendrick's Sias." One individual had to be referred to as "Ou' Sias' Sias' Sias."

The fecundity of the Dutch was enormous. I remember the case of a widower named Van Heerden, who was the father of sixteen children, marrying a widow of the same name who was the mother of seventeen. This union proved fruitful, but to what extent eventually I am unable to say.

One good friend of mine was a certain Mr. Klopper, the name of whose farm I have forgotten. The latter lay near the base of the

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mountain which sends up those two steep cones with flat tops which are such conspicuous landmarks within a radius of over fifty miles. Mr. Klopper, who was aged between sixty and seventy, was one of the largest men I have ever seen. His bulk was so immense that he—very sensibly—had a coffin made to measurement against the day of his demise. This was kept upstairs in the “solder,” where it was used as a receptacle for “bultong” and dried peaches. Mrs. Klopper was a complete physical contrast to her husband. She was less than five feet in height, and was of exceptionally spare build. There was splendid partridge shooting on the farm, so I was a fairly frequent visitor. Many an excellent cup of coffee has Mrs. Klopper brewed for me as I sat talking and smoking with her husband.

Once a torrential rain set in and lasted for several days. The country turned into a swamp ; all the rivers were full and the roads impassable. Mrs. Klopper fell ill and died very suddenly. As the making of a casket for her prospective mortal remains did not suggest any difficulty, and as her health was such that she was expected to live for a long time, no preparations such as those made for her husband's demise had been

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made in her case. But now no planks were available, so the attenuated, tiny body had to be interred in the vast cavernous shell built to Mr. Klopper's Daniel Lambert-like measurements.

By far the most bulky human being I have ever seen, even in a circus, was a certain Mrs. Estment. Twice a year, at "Nachtmaal" time, she used to be brought to church in her wagon. By means of screw-jacks the wheels of the wagon would then be removed, and the hind part of the vehicle lowered to the level of the ground. Then four strong men assisted the lady into the church, where two pews had been knocked into one for her accommodation.

A certain farmer named Botha was much given to thrashing his servants. Over and over again he was fined for this misdemeanour. Eventually the magistrate warned him that a repetition of the offence might have serious consequences. Very early one morning I was awakened by a knock at my door. I found a messenger with a large dish of tempting sausages, sent with Botha's compliments. When I reached the office I found a Hottentot waiting to lodge a complaint. His body bore the imprint of many stripes; he had evidently been severely flogged. He preferred a charge of assault against his master.

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The latter turned out to be none other than Botha, the donor of the sausages. Soon afterwards my Chief appeared.

"By Jove," said he, "I've had a splendid dish of sausages sent to me by Botha this morning."

"So have I," I replied. "By the way, one of his Hottentots has just laid another complaint against him for assault."

Just then I glanced through the window and saw Botha, looking somewhat depressed, coming up the street. My Chief went into his office and closed the door. Botha entered my room with outstretched hand and an ingratiating smile. I informed him of the complaint and suggested that the case might be tried then and there without the formality of a summons. To this he consented, so I told him to go and sit down in the court-room. Just afterwards Mr. Gie sent for me.

"Scully," he said, "send for the sausages that d—d scoundrel gave you, and I will send for mine too."

Two constables were dispatched to fetch the comestibles. At ten o'clock the magistrate took the bench. When Botha's case was called on, the constables marched in and laid the two lots of sausages just under the accused man's

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nose, on the table which stood in front of the prisoner's dock. This was done in accordance with a prearranged plan. I have seldom seen a man so dumfounded as was the culprit.

Botha was fined £5 and severely censured for his attempt to pollute the source of justice. After the fine had been paid the sausages were returned to the donor. They looked most excellent, and I remember being overcome by a feeling of deep regret at not having kept the fact of the donation to myself. It was not I that had to try the case. In any event the Hottentot most probably well deserved the castigation he received.

The lot of the average Civil servant in the Cape Colony is not an enviable one. He is, in nine cases out of ten, doomed to a life of shabby gentility. In spite, however, of obvious disadvantages, the existence of the junior official is a healthier one in the remote country village than it is in the larger centres. Poverty is not so irksome where one is not continually tempted to indulge in pleasures quite beyond one's means. It is certainly better, as I know by personal experience, to be a pauper in Wesselsdorp than in Cape Town or Port Elizabeth.

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Nevertheless, the life the Civil servant leads in a small "dorp" is apt to be very trying, morally as well as intellectually. There is not half enough work in the average country office to absorb his energies. If, therefore, he does not develop some healthful hobby, he is apt to take to drink, or else to sink into a condition of mental and physical sloth from which few emerge. The village contains no club; the hotel bar is therefore the only common meeting ground. With the exception of intemperance, there is little actual vice. On the other hand, there are no ideals. Only one standard of active righteousness is recognized, namely, going to church. If one is only regular at that every other virtue is credited by implication—often in the face of what ought to be conclusive evidence.

The foregoing applies mainly to the clerk. The Resident Magistrate, being usually a family man, has a better time—that is, until his children have passed the standards of the village school and have consequently to be sent to a boarding school at one or other of the larger centres. Then he sinks into poverty and debt.

The senior officer, if he be wise, will keep

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as much as possible to himself, for the dorp society is almost invariably cleft by some feud of ancient origin. In the matter of some of these feuds the original grievance has often become so nebulous that it is no longer easy to define, but the mutual animosity is kept going by a series of insults and annoyances, as a fire which, if left alone would have long since died, is kept alive by contributions of twigs and faggots. Moreover, if the magistrate of the dorp becomes intimate with even a single family on one side of the chasm, the fact is apt to be taken by those on the other as a declaration of hostility. Human beings are essentially unaccountable creatures, and the man who works on the assumption that reason rules their conduct will soon find out what a mistake he has made. Human nature, again, is something like sea-water. Isolate a small pool from the ebbing and the flowing of the tides, and it will become stagnant and offensive.

Nevertheless, until about twenty years ago the Government official counted for a good deal in the social economy of the South African town. Now, under the upheaval resulting from trade development, he has become largely insolvent and wholly negligible. Formerly the

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Civil Commissioner, with his salary of from £500 to £600 a year, was usually the richest man in the community. He and his wife led local society, and invitations to the Residency were regarded as patents of social rank. All this, however, has now been changed. The cost of living has gone up more than a hundred per cent. This has made for the enrichment of the trader. In these days, as I trudge on patched boots to my office, the dust whirled up by the wheels of my grocer's motor-car defiles the black coat which, shiny from much brushing, well deserves superannuation after constant service extending over six strenuous years.

Tarkastad—at all events in the seventies—was a very favourable specimen of the South African dorp. The fertility of the district and the consequent prosperity of the farmers made the little community energetic, and went far towards counteracting that general tendency towards stagnation which is such a common feature of dorp life. We had a volunteer corps—the “Tarka Rifles”—which was about a hundred strong. It was commanded by Dr. Everitt, the District Surgeon. I held a commission in it as lieutenant. Shooting at the

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butts absorbed one afternoon of the week. We had a fair brass band—not, however, connected with the corps. There was also a flourishing cricket club. Tennis had not yet been invented, or rather, resuscitated. Throughout the cool season dances were of frequent occurrence. To these gatherings the daughters of the land used to flock in from the surrounding farms by dozens. Two girls, daughters of a retired farmer who lived in the village, were a continual source of surprise and annoyance to me. They were both sweetly pretty, but would persist in painting their cheeks and lips with crude vermilion. Truya and Maria little dreamt of the concern which this abominable habit caused one of their sincere admirers.

The village contained the usual proportion of quaint characters—human beings in whom the gregarious instincts were somewhat weak, and whose peculiarities therefore sprouted unpruned. Chief among these was old John Barker; he followed the vague calling of a general agent. Old John dwelt quite alone and prepared his own meals—such as they were. Occasionally he would absolutely seclude himself for many days at a time. Then he would emerge and walk around the town, firing off at all and

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sundry a number of barbed sarcasms which he had forged in his retirement. Eventually he remained secluded for a longer period than usual; the authorities decided to investigate matters. When the house was forcibly entered old Barker was dead, and his body in an advanced stage of decomposition.

Another solitary being was a Jew called Rothschild. Inevitably, of course, he came to be known as "The Baron." The Baron was a generous feeder. As he adhered strictly to the observances of his creed, he suffered grievously on the occasion of the *Yom Kippur* fast. On one such occasion a friend and I, in the course of a stroll, noticed the Baron sitting, pallid and melancholy, behind the half-opened shutter of one of his rooms that opened to the street. It was late in the afternoon—just the time when hunger gripped him most sorely. We unfeelingly purchased a beefsteak, grilled it at a kitchen next door to his dwelling, and laid it, steaming and fragrant, on the window-sill beneath his nose.

I recall a peculiar shooting adventure. My friend, John Green—now, alas! no more—came from Cradock to open a branch of the Oriental Bank at Tarkastad, and remained there for

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several months. He accompanied me on many of my shooting trips. We had arranged to go out together on a certain morning, but Green was detained, so I went alone. I have always been a very uncertain shot ; on some days I would shoot remarkably well, on others very badly indeed. On this occasion I shot most wretchedly ; chance after chance at buck came to me, but I invariably missed.

Disgusted at my want of skill, I turned towards home, taking a short cut which involved climbing over a very steep mountain. In descending this I crossed a succession of bare, step-like ledges, the level tops of which were often clear floors of rock, several yards in width. I was leading my pony over one of these which was rather wider than the average, when my eye was caught by a partridge lying flat on the bare surface of the rock. I stood still, and then noticed several other birds similarly disposed. I found I was in the middle of a large covey which, for some reason or another—probably on account of a swooping hawk—had bestowed themselves thus strangely. There was no vestige of cover ; some of the birds were lying within less than ten feet of me.

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Having shot nothing, I thought I would endeavour to secure a brace of birds for my breakfast. Accordingly I sat down, and, getting two of the birds in a line, fired. My bullet hit one bird, tearing it almost to pieces, but missed the other. To my astonishment the covey did not flush; the birds still remained as though glued to the rock. Without standing up I slipped another cartridge into my rifle and shot a second bird. Seven shots I fired, killing five birds. At the seventh shot the balance of the covey flushed. One bird touched my back with its wing as it flew up. Without noticing it, I had been almost sitting on the creature.

I gathered up the five birds, folding their shattered members decently between their respective pairs of wings. Then I bestowed the spoil carefully in my haversack and resumed my homeward course. As I rode through the village John Green came to the door of the bank. I halted, and he came forward to greet me.

"Well," he said, "you have not had any sport, I see."

"Nothing much," I replied.

"Have you shot anything?"

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"Only a few partridges."

"Partridges? But you have a rifle."

"My dear chap," I rejoined in a patronizing tone, "I do not need anything but a rifle to shoot partridges."

He made one or two chaffing remarks, so I, pretending to be nettled, said—

"Well, if you don't believe me, look inside that."

I unslung the haversack and handed it to him. Green pulled out the birds, one by one, and examined them. Their fragmentary condition made it quite clear that they had been killed with bullets. It was long afterwards that I revealed the true facts of the case. In the meantime my reputation as a marksman soared sky-high, and I began to have some glimmering of understanding as to the genesis of solar myths.

I remember once making a remarkable record. It happened to be on the occasion of my last expedition to the Schaapkraal Mountain. I fired five shots and killed three buck—each at a range of over four hundred yards—and two korhaan. My rifle was a long Martini, with the sights modified to suit my own requirements.

Taking it all round, I had better shooting

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in the Tarka district than I have ever enjoyed elsewhere. Occasional episodes when among big game overshadowed any of my Tarka experiences, but in my early wanderings I was often sadly handicapped either by bad armament or scarcity of ammunition.

In those days an enormous trade was done in the matter of selling guns to natives. From this discreditable traffic Tarkastad was wholly free, but Cradock, the seat of magistracy of an adjoining district, was one of its principal centres. In terms of the law then in force any justice of the peace could issue a permit authorizing a native to obtain a gun. The shopkeepers used to pay a fee of £1 for each permit signed in blank. I well remember Dr. Everitt showing me a letter from a Cradock trader enclosing a hundred blank permits for his signature and a cheque for £100. I am glad to be able to record that the enclosures were indignantly returned.

In the later seventies extensive railway works were in progress in various parts of the colony, and the natives flocked down to these in thousands—not because they desired money, but for the purpose of acquiring guns. For the same reason the Basuto flocked to Kimberley. Thought-

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ful men knew what the inevitable result of this would be. President Brand objected to armed crowds of natives crossing the Orange Free State, and, as he had a perfect right to do, turned them back. But an ultimatum from the British Government followed, and the little State had to submit to this hideous injustice. So the arming of the natives went steadily on, and the shameless justices of the peace and traders enriched themselves at an ultimate cost—which, of course, did not fall in any way upon them—of thousands of valuable lives and millions of money. For war broke out in October, 1877, and lasted, with short intermissions, until 1882. Several of the scoundrels who gathered unclean profits in the scandalous manner described, subsequently sat in the Cape Parliament.

In the latter part of September, 1877, I received orders to proceed to Graaff Reinet and assume duty there as second clerk to the Civil Commissioner and Resident Magistrate. This was promotion—as welcome as it was unexpected. So I sold my pony and my rifle, said farewell to the many friends I now had, packed my portmanteau, and started per post-cart for Cradock. This was the first stage of my journey. At Cradock I heard of the beer-fight at the kraal

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of 'Ncaicibi, in the Transkei, which started the war. The kraal in question was close to the boundary-line between the territory of the Gcalekas and that of the Fingos. The original dispute was a personal matter, but members of both tribes were present, the occasion being a wedding feast, and their sleeping mutual hatred flamed up. Immediate war followed; for the first time in five-and-twenty years the peace of South Africa (that is, of the country south of the Orange River) was broken. Much blood and many tears had to flow—the smoke of many ravaged human dwellings had to insult the sky—before the conflict which originated at that beer-party died down.

CHAPTER III

Cradoek—Middleburg—Night journey—Splendid scenery—Graaff Reinet—An enchanting view—Grapes—A debauch on "Moss"—Jacomina Thona—Her inconvenient revelations—Her remarks to the Bench—I score off the Treasury—A long-delayed revenge—"Fifty-hundredths of a shilling"—A parricide—The Schoeman murder—A terrible experience—An impenetrable mystery.

FROM Cradoek I took post-cart for Middleburg. We started late in the afternoon, with the prospect of a night's journey. Just after dark a bad thunderstorm came on. This was followed by dense darkness and a soaking rain. We lost our way through taking a by-road, and narrowly escaped falling headlong into a deep donga. For upwards of an hour I stood in the rain at the heads of the front horses of the team, while the driver retraced our course and sought for the proper road. However, we managed to reach Middleburg the following forenoon. Here I was delayed for more than a day. Next afternoon I again took post-cart for the last and longest stage of the journey.

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The vehicle dignified by the term "post-cart" was little more than a single seat on wheels. It had no tilt; that did not matter, as the weather was fine; but what did matter was there being no back, nor even a strap against which one could lean. Our course led over the Sneeuwberg Range, through bold and splendid scenery. On our right the salient feature of the landscape was Compass Berg—the highest peak in the Cape Colony—towering like a rough-cut spire high over the illimitable ranges lying around it, a tumbled sea breaking into foam of cliff and scaur. On our left the massive Nahdoo, like a stately, robed figure, brooded in its purple mystery, seeming to suggest a monk meditating under a cowl of haze.

We drove through the long night over vast, dreaming plains, with occasional steep descents. When dawn broke over the far-flung mountain spurs and changed the grey of every lofty turret to a living gold, I felt more than compensated for the fatigues of the preceding hours.

It was about seven o'clock in the morning when we reached Graaff Reinet. The town lies in a loop of the Sunday's River. The site is dead-level for the most part, but sheer mountains arise almost from its actual margin on three sides.

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The streets are very wide and these were heavily fringed with trees; they ran at right angles, dividing the blocks of vine-covered erven from each other as accurately as the squares of a chequer-board. The season was springtime; every tree and shrub was green and of a tender hue. The white-walled houses gleamed amid the verdure. The contrast between this oasis of intense fertility and the barren vistas surrounding it—the latter filled with a wild beauty that was all their own—was so acutely delightful as to be almost painful.

In spite of the very great heat which, owing to the sunken situation of the town, prevails throughout the summer, Graaff Reinet was a delightful place to live in. The hospitality of the principal residents—more especially of the Germans belonging to the commercial class—was proverbial. Most social intercourse took place during the evenings. General invitations were issued by certain hostesses for certain evenings of the week. At the gatherings, music, dancing, or card-playing could be indulged in according to individual taste. There was a flourishing archery club, within the grounds of which tennis courts were included. Here the young people of the town assembled twice a week. Four times

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a year archery balls were given. My predecessor had been secretary to this club, and I took over the post from him.

Quite four-fifths of the inhabitants of the town were Dutch. Most of these lived on the products of their vineyards. A great deal of wine and brandy was made. In 1878 the Excise Law was enacted for the purpose of raising revenue wherewith to pay the cost of the wars which the gun-selling traders, with their accomplices the venal justices of the peace, had brought about. Duty at the rate of a shilling per gallon was imposed upon existing stocks. In one month we collected some £1,900.

I fancy the Graaff Reinnet grapes are, for eating purposes, the best in the world. The intense heat of summer, the rich, deep soil, and the copious supply of irrigation water combine to give that wonderful flavour for which they are so widely celebrated. But the richness is what militates against successful wine-making. I do not think that good wine can ever be made from grapes grown in a rich soil. At Graaff Reinnet grapes were so plentiful that—except for purposes of the still and the winepress—they had no market value. The owner of any celebrated vineyard was, as a rule, much gratified if one

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went to sample his fruit. Occasionally, we used to make up parties in the early morning for the purpose of cutting bunches of grapes and eating them before they had become heated by the sun.

During the wine-pressing season we used to quaff foaming tankards of must, or "moss," as it was called. I well remember the first time I tasted this delightful but insidious liquor. Three elderly maiden ladies, the Misses Leisching, managed the public library, their dwelling being under the roof of the library building. "Moss" I had heard of but had never tasted. This Miss Leisching happened to know, so she one day invited me to her dining-room to partake of a more than ordinarily excellent brew. The day was hot, the "moss" cool, foaming, and delicious. After I had drunk several tumbler-fuls my hostess gently suggested that some people were apt to find "moss" heady. However, as I could not imagine such light and delicate nectar causing anything like intoxication, I continued to drink. I remember nothing more until, about two hours later, I awoke to find myself lying on a sofa. But my involuntary debauch had no ill effects, for I felt delightfully refreshed.

There was little or no drunkenness at Graaff

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Reinet, except among low-class coloured people. The local Jane Cakebread was a tall, robust lady of middle age, named Jacomina Thona. For upwards of a quarter of a century Jacomina had spent more than half her time in gaol—for drunkenness or violent incontinence of speech when only “lekker,” or half-tipsy. Many a time I have watched Jacomina being escorted through the streets to the lock-up, sitting on the local “Black Maria,” which was a small, open hand-cart. She possessed a loud voice, clear enunciation, and a fine flow of language. On such occasions she was a terror to some members of the community, for it was her habit to utter loud comments on people she passed in her progress. She had a wonderful memory for moral lapses, and the stratum of society in which she moved when at liberty gave her special opportunities for the acquirement of knowledge of a certain kind. This caused her to be so dreaded that the approach of Jacomina’s chariot, with Jacomina seated, Buddha-wise, upon it, was often the occasion of some inhabitant, usually regarded as reputable, suddenly remembering that he had urgent business round the corner.

The sentences passed by Mr. Hougham Hudson, my Chief, were usually very lenient. Not so,

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however, were those of the Assistant Magistrate, Mr. G. G. Munnik, now one of the senators for the Transvaal. He used invariably to doom poor Jacomina to long terms of spare diet in solitary confinement. On one occasion when Mr. Hudson took the bench for the first time after an extended leave-period, during which Mr. Munnik had acted in his place, Jacomina was brought before him. When she looked up after entering the dock she clapped her hands with joy and called out—

“Dank u Heere—daar set mij lieve ou’ baas weer.” (“Thank the Lord—there sits my dear old master again.”)

Some time afterwards Mr. Hudson had again to go somewhere for a few days on special duty, and Mr. Munnik once more took the bench. Munnik wore a full beard, which was reddish in colour. Jacomina was again the culprit. When she saw who occupied the bench she shrieked in dismay—

“O Got! daar set die rooi duivel weer.” (“Oh, God! there sits the red devil again.”)

Mr. Munnik was now and then detached on special duty to other stations, and on such occasions I would act as Chief Clerk and Assistant Magistrate. Once, during such a period, my Chief

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fell ill, and I was appointed to act as Civil Commissioner and Resident Magistrate. This I considered a great honour. As a warning to junior Civil servants who may be tempted to use the many opportunities they will have of scoring off their chiefs, I will relate a small experience of mine during this acting incumbency. Large collections of Excise duty were being made just then, and the various receipts granted for such duty were recorded on an abstract. At the end of each month this abstract was totalled, signed, and sent to the Treasury. At the foot of the document had to be added a certificate to the effect that the spirits in respect of which duty had been paid had been tested, and that the strength thereof did not exceed "proof," as indicated by Sykes's hydrometer. This certificate was signed by the Chief Constable, who was Excise officer also.

After sending in the abstract at the end of the month a telegram came from the Treasury, calling on me to explain immediately how it was that I had permitted such a subordinate officer as the Excise officer to receive large sums of Excise duty. I replied to the effect that he had not received a single sixpence of such revenue. Then came a telegram asking why he had signed the

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abstract as receiver. I again replied, denying that the abstract had been so signed, and requesting that it might be returned for reference. In due course the document arrived. As I knew to be the case, it was signed by me as receiver, the Excise officer's signature being added under the certificate. I indicated each signature with a big cross in red ink, and sent the abstract back to the Treasury.

At that time the permanent head of the Treasury was a gentleman whom I will refer to as Mr. G. F. G. Morton. His signature was quite illegible; in fact, most preposterously so. I had only quite recently discovered what the hieroglyphics of which it was formed were supposed to indicate.

By return post the receipt of the abstract was acknowledged in an official letter. The latter stated that it had now been observed that it was the Acting Civil Commissioner who had signed as receiver, but that the misunderstanding arose owing to the illegibility of his signature and the consequent difficulty of distinguishing it from that of the Excise officer. The latter, it should be stated, signed himself "Francis Bourke," in large, even script, which extended almost across the page. I, on the

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other hand, had signed my modest "W. C. Scully" in such a small space that the whole signature might have been contained within the curve of one of the ornate flourishes of my subordinate. In fact, the two signatures no more resembled each other than a large head of cabbage resembles a small plant of parsley. Here was my opportunity of scoring. I used it, to my subsequent grievous detriment.

I replied to the effect that I noted with satisfaction the circumstance that the misunderstanding had been cleared up, but at the same time that I could not avoid being struck by the peculiarity of such a rebuke coming from the Treasury, considering that I, in common with all other revenue officers, had to take the signature—a specimen of which was contained in the document under reply—and which I was informed was meant to indicate "G. F. G. Morton"—in the manner indicated by St. Paul in the seventh chapter of 2nd Corinthians—that is, "by faith and not by sight."

I had no reply to what I must now admit was an exceedingly impertinent letter. However, five years afterwards I was appointed, by telegram, as Chief Clerk at an important country station. Just as I was about to start for the

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scene of my appointed duties, my appointment was cancelled, no explanation of the change being given. Some months afterwards a friend of mine, who was a Member of Parliament, called at the Colonial Office in Cape Town and inquired as to why my promotion had been stopped.

"Well," said dear old Hampden Willis, the Under Colonial Secretary, with whom I was not at the time acquainted, "I am told by the Treasury that Scully is rather stupid, and as a good man is wanted at C., we thought it better to send some one else."

My friend endeavoured to persuade Mr. Willis that in whatever other directions my shortcomings might lie, I was undoubtedly not stupid. As a result of this friendly intervention I was shortly afterwards promoted to a post on the Under Colonial Secretary's personal staff.

Some little time afterwards I had another chance, which I was careful not to miss, of scoring off my enemy. Mr. Morton had recently issued a circular in which he referred to the modest, but occasionally useful, coin known outside the Treasury as "sixpence," as "fifty hundredths of a shilling." This, of

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course, caused great amusement. One day I was drinking a glass of Madeira in the bar of the Civil Service Club. Mr. Morton was standing next to me. I asked the steward the price of my drink.

"Sixpence, sir," he replied.

"Pardon me," said I, looking at Mr. Morton with an expression of irritating innocence, "but do you not mean fifty hundredths of a shilling?"

My enemy flushed purple, and gulped heavily.

Among the various *causes de célébre* which came before the court at Graaff Reinets during my stay, two stand forth. Both were cases of murder. One was that of an old farmer who was killed by his son with an axe as he lay in bed. Jealousy was at the bottom of the affair; the elder man had tried to supplant the younger in the affections of the latter's sweetheart. The murdered man had been a gross old scoundrel, who wore his wife to death through a long course of ill-treatment. The son was a powerful and strikingly handsome lad of eighteen. After killing his father he lifted the enormous body on to a horse and removed it to a cave some miles away. This involved a really marvellous feat of strength.

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The lad was sentenced to death before the circuit court. All preparations were made for his execution, but at the last moment he was reprieved, the sentence being commuted to imprisonment for life. It fell to my lot to announce to the condemned man the fact that his life was to be spared. I went to his cell, told him that his fate had been decided, and asked him what he expected it to be. He replied to the effect that he was absolutely indifferent on the subject, and his composed demeanour corroborated this. He received the news without evincing the slightest emotion. I am glad to say that some time before the twenty years had elapsed this man was released.

The other case was the first important one with which I had to do. This was the then celebrated Schoeman murder—one of the most mysterious and distressing tragedies that has ever come under my personal notice.

On a farm called Oprysfontein, some eighteen miles from town, dwelt several families named Schoeman. They were all related. The farm was a large one; the various homesteads were two or three miles apart. In one, newly built, dwelt a young Schoeman and his wife.

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They had been married about a year, and had a baby between two and three months old. One morning, about 3 a.m., at the time when I happened to be acting as Resident Magistrate, word came in to the effect that young Schoeman and his wife had been murdered.

Within a few minutes I was in the saddle, and, accompanied by a couple of mounted policemen, riding as hard as I could for Oprysfontein. The police horses were poor pacers, so I outstripped them and arrived at the scene of the tragedy alone. The house—a small cottage—stood on a low, steep-sided bluff that jutted over the course of a small river which had its source among the precipitous gorges of the Nahdoo Mountain. The little cottage stood out saliently among the brown, stony mountains which surrounded it. There it stood, its white walls reflecting the beams of the new-arisen sun. The doors and windows were fast-closed. It was a charnel-casket brimming with terror and mystery. I off-saddled my panting horse, and then, with fast-beating pulses, stepped to the little raised stoep, where I stood for some seconds with my shrinking hand on the knob of the door. I well remember the awe that clutched at my

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heart as I paused before that dreadful portal. The silence was only broken by the chanting call of a covey of partridges far up on the hillside. There was not a human being in sight. Then, with an effort, I threw the door wide open, and the sunlight flooded in.

I will now give a short history of the tragedy as based on ascertained facts. The evening before, just after night had fallen, young Schoeman and his wife were sitting at the supper-table in the "voorhuis," or front room. The cottage, which was built of brick and had clay floors, contained only four rooms — the "voorhuis," or living-room, the bedroom on the right, the kitchen at the left back, and the store-room at the right back. The doors of both the latter rooms led into the "voorhuis," and the window of the store-room opened at the back of the house. In the store-room an old Hottentot shepherd slept.

Schoeman was sitting with his back to the front door; his wife, with the baby on her lap, was sitting opposite him. On Schoeman's left, a few feet away, the recently slaughtered carcass of a sheep hung from a rafter. A knock was heard at the front door; Schoeman got up and opened the latter. Some one asked

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for meat, and Schoeman, taking a knife from the table, turned towards the hanging carcass. Then a shot was fired and a bullet passed through Schoeman's chest, burying itself in the wall and loosening a large flake of plaster. I subsequently dug this bullet out; it was large and round, thus indicating that it had been fired from a gun of unusual type—one that had even then become practically obsolete.

The unhappy man ran past the table into the bedroom—a thick, continuous gush of blood indicating his course. His wife apparently followed with the baby. A Westly Richards lifting-block rifle hung from a rack in the bedroom. It was probably with a view to securing this that poor Schoeman made his last despairing effort. But the murderer evidently got the rifle and with it shot Schoeman's wife. She must have been on her knees, or crouching—possibly in an attitude of appeal for mercy, when shot, for the bullet entered just above her left breast and emerged at her right hip.

The old Hottentot sprang up at the first shot, dashed through the window, and ran as hard as he could to the homestead of the murdered man's father, about three miles away. Old Schoeman, with another son and a nephew,

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saddled up, and the three went down, armed to the teeth, to the scene of the tragedy. But they acted with unspeakable cowardice, for, after riding several times round the house, they departed without entering, and the little baby was left wailing all night in the pool formed by the mingled blood of its slain father and mother.

I shall never forget my sensations on entering that desolated little homestead. The first thing that caught my eye was the brown dent in the white-washed wall where the bullet had entered. The uneaten supper was still on the table; a chair lay overturned. The broad, continuous blood-trail led from just beneath the carcass of the sheep across the threshold of the bedroom. The door of the latter stood open to the extent of about six inches. A German clock with a brown wooden case ticked busily away, all regardless of the horror that had happened before its impassive face. I afterwards thought it was the ticking of this clock that kept me from fainting.

I gazed into the bedroom through the six-inch-wide strip of space. Inside was deep gloom, for the window was closely shuttered. As my eyes grew accustomed to the semi-

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darkness something white, that might have been a face, glimmered . . . I thought I heard a faint stir. . . .

What I found in that chamber of horrors I dare not describe.

The inquest was duly held and a grave was dug in the little garden below the bluff, near the bank of the river. The grave was out of sight of the house, although not more than sixty to seventy yards away from it. Next day the funeral took place. There was a large attendance. The victims had been so very young—their united ages did not amount to forty—and the tragedy was so shrouded in mystery, that a thrill of sympathy and horror moved the whole country-side. When the company returned from the grave the murdered man's rifle, missing until then, was found lying openly on the ground in front of the house.

And to the present day no clue to the mystery has been discovered.* Needless to say, neither effort nor expense was spared towards discovering the perpetrators of this foul crime.

* I have recently been informed that a farmer who lived in the vicinity confessed, on his deathbed, to having committed this murder.

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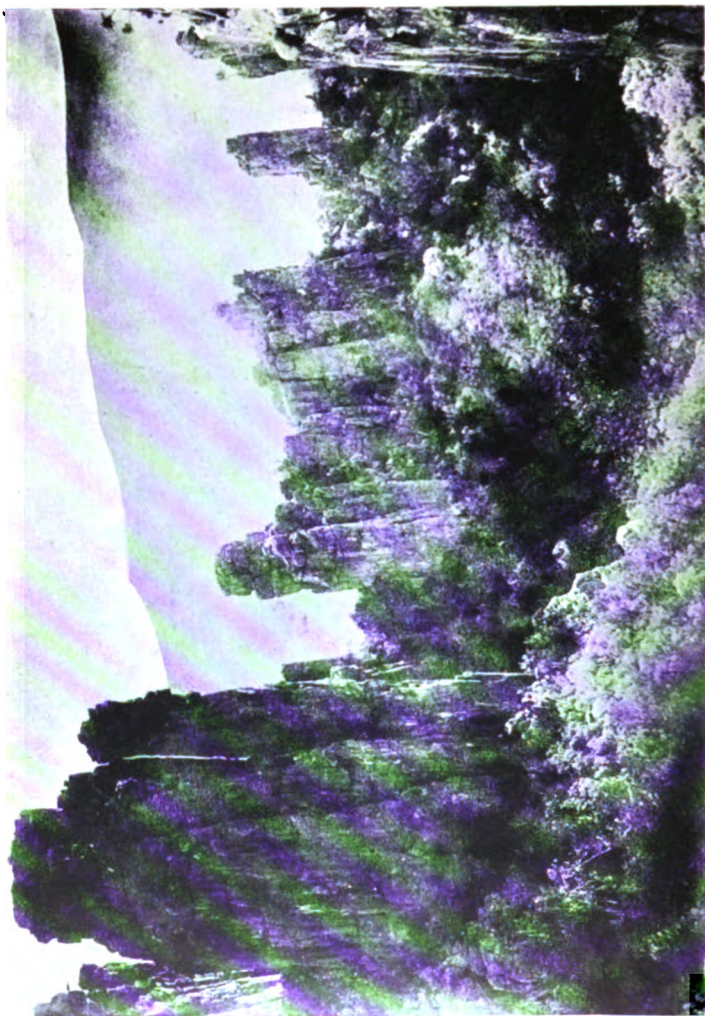


Photo by

SUNRISE IN THE VALLEY OF DESOLATION, GRAAFF REINET.

[H. Ree, Sr.]

To face p. 79.

CHAPTER IV

Graaff Reinet and its history—Office work—Obsolete methods—Mr. Charles Rubidge and Wellwood—An adventure with bees—A baboon hunt—Siege of the kopje—Mr. Pieter Maynier—Persecution of a credulous man—"Are you a Freemason?"—Jupiter's satellite—The flagged passage—The Midland Seminary—Piano practice—Am accused on the Bench of being a ruffian—The "Back Streeters"—An uncanny experience.

GRAAFF REINET has an interesting history. Founded in 1785, it soon became a centre of independent thought and protest against the strangling disabilities imposed by the old Dutch East India Company upon all under its sway. In 1795 the then remote district showed its healthful vitality by developing rebellious tendencies. After the capitulation of the Cape to the British, Graaff Reinet declared itself a republic, refusing to be bound by the treaty. It was in the collective mind of the sturdy yeomen of the Sneeuwberg that the idea of the Great Trek had birth. Pretorius, one of

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the greatest leaders of men that South Africa has produced, was Graaff Reinet born.

The Record Room at the Public Offices was brimming with a confused and congested mass of valuable documents—which were being grievously pillaged by mice. I believe Mr. Liebbrandt, Keeper of the Cape Archives, years afterwards sorted out and indexed what still remained of this interesting material. It has been my constant regret that I did not take the arrangement and preservation of these records in hand during my spare time. I regard this as among the more serious of my lost opportunities. But in the seventies the national spirit of South Africa was still slumbering, and in my own case archery and all that went with it was then far more important than archives.

The office work was utterly uninteresting. Out of date as many of the methods to-day followed in the Public Service are, they are wildly revolutionary compared to those of thirty years ago. In these days of telephones, typewriters, and duplicators, it is difficult to realize that up to about the middle eighties every document written in a Government office had to be laboriously copied by hand. In a large

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district such as Graaff Reinet then was (it has since had large slices cut off to contribute to the formation of other districts), a great deal of work had to be done. Occasionally a host of field cornets and other rural officials required to be instructed by circular, every single copy of which had to be written out. When acting as Chief Clerk I was struck by the absurdity of the hand-copying system, knowing, as I did, that banks and business houses generally used the copying-press. Accordingly I borrowed such a press, and purchased, out of my own meagre resources, a letter-book and some copying ink. This proved an immense saving of labour. But I had not reckoned with the *vis inertia* of the Cape Town Circumlocution Office—the strangling power of red tape. An official order was issued from the Colonial Secretary's Department—then the seat of Service Administration—ordering that press-copying should forthwith be discontinued. It was mentioned in the order that this step was taken under express instructions from Sir Gordon Sprigg, who was at that time Prime Minister. Surely Mr. Tite Barnacle could not have gone farther than this!

I managed to make many friends among the

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Graaff Reinet farmers, but was seldom able to accept the kind invitations I received to visit their farms. Chief among these friends I must regard the late Mr. Charles Rubidge, of Wellwood, and his family. Many years previously Mr. Rubidge had taken up a piece of absolutely desert land among the foothills of the Great Sneeuwberg Range. The major portion of this was a waterless plain, stretching eastward from the foot of a steep mountain. Here he built a homestead—a mere shanty at first—but as he prospered the homestead grew until, in the days when I knew it, a large mansion—which seemed to exude hospitality from every pore—stood embowered in trees, whilst behind it a village of sheds, byres, barns, and stables bore witness as to what energy and intelligence can effect in the face of adverse conditions.

By an ingeniously devised system of dams—dams built one above the other so that any average overspill from the higher would be caught by those lower down the gentle slope—a large quantity of the storm-water of summer was conserved. Thus the torrents, instead of being allowed to hurtle down, laden with valuable alluvium, to the all-absorbing ocean, were conserved for man's use. Below the dam—

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system stood an orange grove which was the pride of the district. I forget how many hundreds of trees it contained, but I know that the value of the annual output of fruit was enough to make the farm—quite irrespective of its stock—a paying concern. The whole of Wellwood was fenced—an unusual circumstance in those days. For many years Mr. Rubidge's speciality as a farmer had been the breeding of high-class sheep. However, in 1878 he had succumbed to the temptations of ostrich farming, and was making a lot of money at that then unusual pursuit.

When the Wellwood land was first taken up about a dozen springbucks—the remnant of a perished host—flitted like ghosts over the extensive plain which lay to the south of the homestead. These Mr. Rubidge strictly preserved. The bucks increased and multiplied to such an extent that for some years before my first visit it had been found necessary to shoot down hundreds each season. The great annual sporting event at Graaff Reinet was the Queen's Birthday springbuck shoot at Wellwood.

In spite of the strenuous life the Squire of Wellwood had led, he was exceedingly well read. Many a long ramble he and I took

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together, discoursing of righteousness, of temperance, and of judgment to come. Comparative mythology was his favourite subject. He thought deeply and logically, and had a most stimulating effect upon any one who came under his influence. As a matter of fact, Mr. Rubidge was the first original thinker with whom I had come in contact. Although half a century separated us in point of age, I found his companionship in every way delightful. He afforded a remarkable illustration as to how a man can, by the work of his own hands, achieve conspicuous material success and at the same time be a deep dreamer. He had, he told me, been intellectually lonely all his life. Loneliness is the heavy penalty which Nature imposes upon originality. /

On a very mountainous farm which adjoined Wellwood dwelt Mr. Joseph McCabe, a nephew of Mrs. Rubidge. Here I spent more than one pleasant holiday, wandering over the everlasting hills in pursuit of game and drinking in the spirit of the incomparable scenery. I well remember an adventure McCabe and I had with bees in a certain gorge far up among the highest mountains. Upwards of a hundred feet from the bed was a soft layer of rock over

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which a hard stratum projected like a lip for several feet. This layer was full of small apertures ; in these many swarms of bees had built. Some of the nests were so rich that great masses of comb protruded outside the openings. Owing to the overhanging ledge it was quite impossible to reach the nests from above. Eventually we conceived a plan for the securing of some of the honey, and one day we arranged an expedition to the gorge for the purpose of putting this plan into execution.

We borrowed a rifle from which could be fired bullets containing copper explosive shells. Taking our station immediately below the cliff, we discharged the missiles into the nests. Masses of honeycomb, rich and luscious, came tumbling down the rock-face to where we were concealed. Just as we began to enjoy ourselves the bees discovered us. I heard a loud, millionfold hum, and, looking up, saw the angry bees swooping down in a dark cloud. We stood not on the order of our going, but as the gorge was a chaos of angular boulders and our progress was accordingly slow, we were severely punished. Having dropped the rifle in our flight we had to wait for a long time before it was possible to recover it.

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One of the rarest and most enjoyable forms of sport in South Africa is to be had at a baboon hunt. Owing to the leopard having been more or less exterminated in most parts of the Cape Colony, baboons have enormously increased in numbers. It should, perhaps, be stated that the baboon was the leopard's favourite food and the leopard the baboon's only enemy.

Where farms are located among rugged, rock-crowned mountains, baboons are occasionally a serious menace to prosperity. One atrocity of which these creatures are often guilty is the tearing open of young lambs for the purpose of drinking the milk which their stomachs contain. I believe that owing to systematic efforts towards eradication baboons are neither so plentiful nor so aggressive now in the Midlands as they were thirty years ago. The liberal reward offered for their tails by Government has almost cleared of baboons some districts, every mountain of which used to be garrisoned by these great simians.

The preliminaries to a baboon hunt require considerable thought, care, and skill. The big initial difficulty is to ascertain where a troop sleeps, for the enemy must be beleaguered at

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night, and baboons continually change their habitation; in fact, during some periods they seldom sleep two nights in succession at the same spot. There are, however, certain well-known lairs which they inhabit from time to time, and by setting an experienced old Hottentot on the trail of a troop for several days beforehand, it is occasionally possible to forecast the lair in which they will sleep on a given night. An isolated kopje on some mountain-slope is usually the chosen locality.

For some days before the projected attack those intending to take part in it hold themselves in readiness to assemble at the farmhouse nearest the lair at the given signal. It is necessary to engage a considerable number of hunters, for the kopje has to be completely invested. Each hunter brings a rifle, and should have at least a hundred cartridges.

The attacking party starts in time to permit of its arriving at the scene of operations about an hour before daybreak. After the horses have been disposed of in some hollow out of reach of stray bullets, the besiegers surround the kopje, forming a circle round it, and placed at a distance of from fifty to sixty yards from one another, according to circumstances.

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Of course the circle cannot be a regular one, as the configuration of the ground has to be taken into consideration. Each man must remain at his post all day, for it will be quite late in the afternoon before the siege comes to an end. Accordingly, he should provide himself with water, food, and tobacco. If studiously inclined, he may bring a book, because he will have absolutely nothing to do for several hours during the early part of the day.

We will assume that the attacking force, some thirty strong, has been posted—its units forming a loose-linked chain completely around the beleaguered fortress. Just after daybreak will be heard a few coughs, barks, and guttural grunts. Then, apparently, one or two fights will take place, for baboons in a state of nature are exceedingly quarrelsome animals. If the troop be a large one there will most probably be two leaders. These are baboons of immense size, occasionally several times as big as any other members of the community. The explanation of this probably is that as the young males grow up and begin paying addresses to the females, the two old ones kill them. This discrepancy in size is very remark-

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able indeed. I know one undoubted case of a baboon being shot in the neighbourhood of Matatiele which weighed over 250 lb. But the size of this creature must have been quite phenomenal; it is seldom that the weight of a leader reaches 150 lb.

When the light has somewhat grown, the baboons will begin to forage down the sides of the kopje, turning over stones in their search for scorpions, centipedes, and other vermin. If the light is sufficiently strong to enable you to see your foresight, you will probably try a shot, and as soon as the shot falls the other besiegers will fire at any other animals which are visible. Immediately the whole troop will take cover among the boulders, getting completely out of sight in a few seconds. It is now that the studious man will score, because for the next few hours not a baboon will show so much as the tip of his tail. When, however, the sun grows hot, you will hear a few more guttural coughs and some of the older animals will mount the highest rocks and look anxiously forth. But a volley will send them scuttling back to cover, and once more the kopje will seem to be uninhabited.

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After an interval of about half an hour you will hear a hubbub of raucous voices, and a number of baboons will run down the kopje-side. Upon them about a third of the rifles will converge, and the storm of bullets will drive them back to hiding. Soon afterwards a sortie may be attempted on the other side of the kopje, with the same result. By this time several animals will have been seen to fall. Some lie still; others drag themselves back to cover after their unscathed companions. This sort of thing may go on at short intervals for several hours. Then, after a longer interval than usual, the whole troop will charge out in a body—probably covering a distance of from a hundred to a hundred and fifty yards before the rifle-fire drives them back, with depleted numbers. It is in repelling this rush that carefulness must be exercised, for if the baboons should succeed in breaking through the line the operations would be at an end. Moreover, each has to be heedful not to fire in the direction of the other besiegers.

It is pitiful now to see the wounded creatures dragging themselves over the battlefield, but you bring to memory the numbers of little

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lambs these brutes have torn open, and thus harden your heart. Sortie after sortie now takes place, each more desperate than the last. Of the original hundred and fifty or so which the garrison contained, more than half are dead or disabled. The survivors call to each other, uttering yells and snarls of dismay and fury. At length the desperate remnant blunders on the only means of salvation. Scattered in complete disorder they rush forth in every direction at once, passing between the hunters, who now, for fear of hitting each other, dare not shoot. Thus most of these animals escape who adopt this tactic. The hunters then spring up, and, after searching the field and despatching the wounded, collect the tails of the slain for the purpose of claiming the Government bonus. A baboon hunt has all the excitement of war, without its dangers.

The South African baboon possesses intelligence of a high order, and is quite capable of being—if not civilized exactly—tamed to man's service. The natives always say that baboons and monkeys can talk, but are afraid to do so within human hearing lest they should be captured and made to work. I know of two quite authentic instances of

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baboons having been completely domesticated. One was at Uitenhage, where a pointsman on the railway line lost his legs through an accident. This man had a tame baboon, which used to haul him down on a trolley every day to the scene of his labours, and there, under direction, manipulate the points for him. This went on for many years. The baboon in question used sometimes to be brought to the hotel in the evening. There he would act as waiter, carrying trays of liquor to the guests. However, one of his peculiarities had to be taken into account. A glass of his favourite tippie—I forget for the moment what it was, but it was something alcoholic—had to be placed on the tray with the other items. After carrying the tray to where the guests were he would place it on the floor while he consumed his own beverage. Then he would walk from one guest to another, distributing the drinks. If any one attempted to help himself before the waiter had consumed his own drink, a disturbance ensued.

The other instance was that of a baboon captured when very young on the farm of a Mr. Rogers, in the Cathcart district. This animal, when it grew up, was trained to the

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calling of a shepherd—and a most excellent shepherd it made. Intense love for the animals under its charge was this creature's dominant characteristic; it was regularly rationed, and it slept in the shed with its charges, which it could not bear to let out of its sight. The baboon's only fault was the outcome of its extreme solicitude; if the most distant coughing-bark of a wild baboon was heard in the veld, the shepherd would hurry his flock back to the homestead and pen it in the fold.

Baboons often inhabit absolutely waterless tracts, but in seasons of severe drought they evidently suffer severely from thirst. I have more than once, when passing in the train along the arid plains that stretch from the foot of the Nieuwveld Mountain Range, seen baboons digging pits in the sand-choked courses down which occasional torrents flow, in the vain hope of getting water. Sometimes the train passed within thirty or forty yards of the diggers, but they merely glanced up and then immediately resumed their work.

Readers of old Le Valliant's charming book of "Travel in the Eighteenth Century" will remember the accomplishments of Kees, his tame baboon. In every case within my

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knowledge the most salient characteristic of the tamed animal has been an intense and inextinguishable hatred of its kind.

One of my best friends at Graaff Reinet was old Mr. Pieter Maynier. He was a universal favourite, especially with young men. Mr. Maynier was in somewhat straitened circumstances, but had seen better days. He lived in apartments in an hotel kept by an old lady named Peachman, who was fat, not fair, and considerably over forty. The hotel was not a flourishing concern; I fear it is but too true that the proprietor drank most, if not all, of the profits. The building was an old Dutch mansion, and it contained several noble rooms fitted out with teak, and with mullioned windows set in deep embrasures.

In one of these dwelt "Oom Piet," and there about a dozen of us used to congregate on one evening each week to hold a symposium. How we used to make the great teak baulks which supported the ceiling ring with our choruses! One of the regular guests played the banjo; on rare occasions we captured a fiddler. Many were the songs we sang, many the yarns we told, many the plots, with practical jokes as their objective, we concocted.

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One man who habitually joined these gatherings afforded us great entertainment. Why he submitted to what can only be described as perpetual immolation on the altar of our sport has always been a mystery. He was, in the main, a good fellow. He held a responsible position in the town; he played a good game of cricket; he was not physically feeble. But he was so nervous that, literally, he almost feared his own shadow, and so gullible that if approached artfully enough he could be got to believe anything, no matter how preposterous. He had an intensely morbid fear of illness in any form. I have more than once been the occasion of his going to bed and sending for a doctor, simply by stopping him in the street, getting him to exhibit his tongue, and telling him he looked ill.

This individual, whom I will call Druce, should have been an object of pity, but the young are cruel thoughtlessly because experience has not deepened their sympathies. I am now heartily ashamed of the part I took in persecuting poor Druce.

I well remember the occasion of one of our gatherings at which he was present. My friend, Mr. John Brown Ellis, then working

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as an engineer on the local railway construction works, was also one of the company. Ellis stood up suddenly, tiptoed to the door, closed and locked it, and then returned to the circle with a finger on his lip and a look of solemnity on his countenance. We knew that something was in the wind, but were content to await developments. Then Ellis, who had remained standing after rejoining the circle, began making passes in the air and uttering gibberish. This, at his wink, we repeated, one and all. All at once he paused and threw an apprehensive glance around the circle.

“By the way,” he said, “we are all Freemasons here, I suppose?”

One by one we assured him that we belonged to the Craft. When Druce was questioned he admitted that he was not a Freemason.

“My G—d!” exclaimed Ellis, in a horrified tone, “we have been revealing our secrets to a man who is not a Mason. We must initiate him at once.”

In vain poor Druce protested that he had not the slightest recollection of what had been said or done when we practised our mysteries. We were inexorable, assuring him that by the immutable laws of the Brotherhood initiation

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or death was the alternative. A guard was placed at the door. The bell was rung for Mrs. Peachman; we insisted on blindfolding her before admission. She was too accustomed to our extravagances to demur.

"Mrs. Peachman," said Ellis, speaking with great solemnity, "have you a gridiron—a large one?"

"Yes, sir."

"Mrs. Peachman, is the kitchen fire still alight?"

"Yes, sir."

"Mrs. Peachman, make that gridiron red-hot at once, and bring it up."

"All right, sir."

I will draw a veil over the subsequent proceedings.

For a time Druce and I lived in the same house. Once, when I was acting as Civil Commissioner, some ridiculous, silly-season paragraph was going the round of the newspapers. This was to the effect that one of Jupiter's satellites had broken loose and was wandering aimlessly through space. There was supposed to be some possibility of this errant body coming within the sphere of the earth's attraction and smashing us up. I persuaded Druce

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that the danger was real and imminent. With the co-operation of the telegraphist I concocted a telegram and arranged to have it delivered to me when Druce was present. It was supposed to be from the Prime Minister, and read as follows:—

“Astronomer Royal has notified probability of contact between one of Jupiter’s satellites and the earth’s surface in the Midland Province. This will probably be accompanied by earthquake. Take all possible precautions, but do not create panic.”

Druce hastened to the head of the firm by which he was employed and communicated the dire intelligence. He begged to be permitted to remove the books of the firm from the double-storied building in which his office was, to one less likely to collapse in the expected convulsion. The head of the firm had been much inconvenienced by Druce’s illnesses, which had been induced by my suggestion. He now came to my office and gave formal notice that if I did not leave Druce alone he would report me to Government.

I think that Druce dreaded getting his feet wet more than anything else. On one occasion he and I happened to be the only persons

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sleeping in the house in which we lived, all the others having gone off on a holiday. It was midnight, and I was fast asleep. The season was summer: a heavy thunderstorm had broken in the afternoon, and the roads and footways were sodden with water. I heard a loud knock at the front door. Upon opening I saw a man named H., who was a cousin of Druce. He asked me to give him a bed. This I agreed to do. Soon I noticed that he had been drinking just a little more than was good for him. He asked where Druce was. I replied that he was in bed, and fast asleep. Quoth H.—

“I want some grapes, so will send Druce down the garden barefoot to fetch them.”

I begged and besought of H. not to insist on this cruel ordeal; I really feared the effect of it on Druce's health. It was only by means of a compromise that I was enabled to get him off. There was a long, flagged passage at the back of the house. It was arranged that Druce was to be carried to this, deposited barefoot in the middle of it, and prevented from emerging for the space of one minute.

We opened Druce's room and entered it. The victim pretended to be asleep; H. pulled

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off the bedclothes and lifted him like a baby. Druce expostulated wildly, but his cousin was strong and inexorable. We reached the passage, which had been lit up for the occasion. According to a condition imposed by H., I had to hold one end of the passage for sixty seconds after Druce touched the flags. H. dropped him in the middle of the passage and rushed to guard the other end.

Druce was clad in a nightshirt. As soon as he felt the cold of the flags he sprang up with a shriek and fled to my end of the passage. Being bound by the compromise, I could not let him escape. He rushed to the other end, his gait suggesting the cantering of a horse; had the flags been red-hot he could not have dreaded their touch more. Shrieking that he would surely die of a number of pulmonary disorders, he reached the other outlet, where the inexorable H. sternly drove him back. Then he cantered back to my end. I gave him the benefit of the doubt as to the number of seconds that had elapsed, and let him escape.

Mr. John Brown Ellis lived next to the Midland Seminary for young ladies—then, I believe, the largest establishment but one of

its kind in South Africa. A row of rooms devoted to piano practice overlooked his garden. One summer evening I was sitting with Mr. and Mrs. Ellis on the stoep at the back of the house. The air was throbbing with discord from the tortured strings of six separate instruments being operated on by six damsels in half a dozen various stages of incompetence. Ellis was complaining bitterly; he declared that he could stand the row no longer, and that he would give notice to his landlord next day. We strolled together down the path and paused before one of the wide-opened windows. A youthful pupil was wrestling with "The Maiden's Prayer"; at her back stood an admonishing teacher of severe aspect. Something prompted me to turn the tail of my coat over my head, stick the latter over the window-sill, and call out "Boo-oo." With wild shrieks pupil and teacher rushed from the room.

A few days afterwards I had to take the bench. Some small boys were being prosecuted for having rushed in and broken the ranks of the two-and-two procession of girls returning from church on the previous Sunday night. Mr. Tom Auret, the attorney who attended to the legal business of the Institution, was the

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prosecutor. In addressing the court after the close of the evidence, he delivered himself as follows :—

“You have no idea, your Worship, of the persecution to which these ladies are subjected. Only a few nights ago some ruffian got into Mr. Ellis’s garden and put his head through the open window of a room in which one of the teachers was instructing a pupil, and shouted. The ladies were seriously alarmed.”

“Mr. Auret,” I replied, “what you mention fills me with indignation and distress. I can only express the hope that the police may be able to discover the perpetrator of so disgraceful an outrage. In the meantime, please convey to the ladies of the Seminary, my deepest sympathy with them in their annoyances, and my most earnest hope that the culprit may be discovered and severely punished.”

The “Back Streeters,” as the agricultural inhabitants of the town were called, being in a considerable majority over all other sections of the population combined, ruled the municipal roast. These people mostly derived their means of livelihood from their vineyards. The drinking-water of the town still ran in open furrows at the sides of the streets, but the

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Back Streeters would not consent to its being piped; the streets were unlit, but the Back Streeters refused to consent to a single penny being spent on lamps. The one municipal ideal of these people was the keeping down of rates. The Front Streeter might wax hysterical at public meetings, the local paper pour forth scorn in eloquent leading articles, but the withers of the Back Streeter remained unwrung. He would not argue the point; a simple, stolid *non possumus* negated every proposal involving increased expenditure.

And in view of the inordinate increase of municipal debt in other parts of South Africa, who can say that these people were not, in the main, right. Progress is a good thing, but much that goes by that term nowadays might be better described as furious driving. A man trundling a wheelbarrow loaded with manure, progresses; so does a runaway horse or a motor-car tearing along at fifty miles an hour. But the barrow is useful, while the others are destructive. There has been far too much of the runaway horse and the furiously driven motor-car in South Africa of late years. Had *festina lente* been our motto we should have been spared many miseries.

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I recall a very curious thing that happened at Kruidfontein, a sort of hotel-sanatorium about ten miles from Graaff Reinet, where there was a sulphur spring. Here I used occasionally to sojourn, for the purpose of recruiting, when ague, a reminiscence of wanderings in fever-stricken regions, recurred. On a certain occasion the late Mr. David Benjamin, of Lisbon-Berlyn fame, and I were the only guests. One evening Mr. Charlwood, the proprietor, his wife, David Benjamin, and I were sitting in the common-room absorbed in a game of whist. It was a bright, moonlit night. The main road passed the door of the hotel. We heard the sound of an approaching vehicle; the beat of the horses' feet, the crunch of the wheels on the gravel, the jolting noise which the neck-bar of a Cape cart makes on the pole—all were clearly, and with increasing loudness, audible. Then it seemed as though the vehicle halted before the house. Mr. Charlwood, who was a keen whist player, laid his cards on the table with a sigh, stood up and went to the door. Benjamin and I followed him; Mrs. Charlwood went towards the kitchen with a view to the contingency of having to prepare food.

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But there was no vehicle. The three of us stood silently on the stoep ; for some seconds each seemed unwilling to speak. The groom was standing at the side of the stoep, trembling in every limb. He, too, had heard the sound of the approaching vehicle when he was in the act of undressing in his room next to the stable, and had quickly reclothed himself and run up the passage expecting to stand at the horses' heads.

Absolutely empty the plain stretched around us. The night was still. We searched with a lantern for spoor, but could find no trace. The fowls, of which a large number were kept at Kruidfontein, had been scratching all over the road during the afternoon. No wheels had passed over the scratches. It was an uncanny experience.

CHAPTER V

Aberdeen—Good shooting—Coursing—Strained relations with my Chief—Caught in his own snare—Steenbok or porcupine—An awkward official situation—Off to the wars—My troopers' horsemanship—"A square-faced turkey"—Captain Hood's opinion—Wavell's column—Hut-burning—A horror narrowly avoided—What the pot contained—Mutiny of the "Cape Town Rangers"—Hornets—A nervous ride—An awkward situation—Trial of the mutineers—My narrow escape—Basutoland—Capture of horses by the enemy—I become a sorry spectacle—Wavell's column found—Swimming the Kraai River—The sack of Aliwal North—The penalty for being sober—Condition of things in Basutoland—The White Kopje—On cattle guard—Deafened by a cannon-shot—The Basuto War unjustifiable—Return to civil life.

AFTER being stationed for about two years at Graaff Reinet, I was transferred to Aberdeen as sole clerk to the Civil Commissioner and Resident Magistrate there. Aberdeen was an adjoining district, newly constituted as such. My Chief was the subsequently notorious Arthur Tweed. I can say nothing good of him, so will refrain from saying anything else. The village of Aberdeen

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lies well out on the great plateau that stretches towards the coast from the base of the Camdeboo Mountains. It was a very quaint little place—a sort of museum of human curiosities.

Game was very plentiful in the vicinity; previous to my arrival not a single member of the community used a gun. On the enormous commonage attached to the village, hares abounded—in fact, they were literally in thousands. It was for a long time my habit to walk out every afternoon after the office had been closed and shoot as many hares as I could carry. Partridges, korhaan, and steenbok were also to be found. Over the illimitable plains that stretched away to the westward springbucks roamed in fairly large herds, but these were beyond my range as a pedestrian.

About six months after my arrival a coursing club was started. Altogether about six couple of dogs were available. I had a greyhound bitch named “Coquette”—a marvel for speed—and a three-quarter-bred Arab mare that could show her heels to anything else in the field. Twice a week we met—on Saturday mornings and Thursday afternoons. Steenbok, jackals, and hares were our quarry. The sport we had was magnificent, for the veld was neither too hard

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nor too soft for the hoofs of a horse, and was unusually free from holes. The plains stretched apparently to infinity on three sides; on the fourth the great mass of the Camdeboo seemed to spring like a sheer rampart from its base. This was the first time I had ever indulged in the noble pastime of coursing, than which few forms of sport have given me greater pleasure.

My relations with Mr. Tweed were strained from the commencement, and this was an ever-present worry. He used to set all sorts of traps for me, but I never was caught. However, on one occasion he got badly scratched in one of his own snares. It happened in this wise:

In those days the Government Savings Bank was kept by the Civil Commissioner's clerk. One day, at five minutes to four on the last day of the month, after I had closed my cash-book, a small boy walked into the office with sixpence, and said he wanted to open an account in the Savings Bank. Now, it was not possible to open an account with less than a shilling, so I told the youngster, whom I knew, to retain his sixpence and return the following day. I meant to make him a present of the other sixpence so as to enable him to start his book. I did not then know that Mr. Tweed had sent him to me. Next morn-

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ing I received an official letter from my Chief saying that as I had refused to receive a Savings Bank deposit within office hours, he had taken the money and entered it in his cash-book. He added that he meant to report the circumstance to the Treasury. I was not asked for an explanation, so I tendered none.

When the monthly accounts were sent off, there was, of course, a discrepancy of sixpence. In course of time I was called upon for my report. I merely quoted the regulation limiting the sums deposited to shillings, or multiples of that sum. What explanation Mr. Tweed gave I never found out.

I once spent a week-end with some friends at the Camdeboo. Very early on Monday morning I rode home. It happened to be the first day of the close season for game. Just about that time the enforcement of the long-obsolete Game Law was taken in hand under Government instructions.

I had just emerged from the foothills of the Camdeboo and was taking a short cut across the plains. A steenbok jumped up and Coquette gave chase. I could not do otherwise than let the mare out, and we had a glorious chase, which ended in the buck being caught. Then arose the question as to what I was to do with the game, for

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I could not bear to leave it to waste in the veld. I knew, of course, that Mr. Tweed would jump at any opportunity of getting me into trouble.

The steenbok, although one of the swiftest of animals, is very small. I stripped off my shirt, put the carcass into it, and tied the bundle behind my saddle. In entering the village I had to pass Mr. Tweed's house ; he was standing on his stoep. As I rode past he signed to me to stop, and I did so.

"What have you got there?" he asked.

"A porcupine," I replied. "Good morning!" Then I rode on.

"Hi—come here—I want you!" he called out.

I cantered to my stable and told the boy, whose many duties included those of groom, that I would give him leave of absence for the day. Then I loosened the dead buck and locked it in the forage-room. Later in the day Mr. Tweed sent the police to inspect the stable, but I refused them entrance. That night I cut the carcass up and distributed the meat among my friends.

In those days it was a tradition of the Civil Service that in any quarrel between the head of an office and a subordinate, the latter was always found to be in the wrong—quite irrespective of the merits of the particular dispute. I knew

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this, but nevertheless decided to take a bold course. Mr. Tweed was guilty of acts which put him completely in the power of any one who cared to report him. I reported him, but was careful not to mention any personal grievance. I was suspended, of course. Another magistrate was sent to investigate. He only inquired into one case. This he reported on, asking at the same time for further instructions. A most serious charge had been proved, right to the hilt.

Here was an unprecedented situation for the Tite Barnacle fraternity to deal with. I could not be put in the wrong. What, under the circumstances, could be done? Mr. Tweed had considerable influence at headquarters, but my being sacrificed was out of the question. Relief to the perplexed Barnacles came from an unexpected quarter. The Tembu War was in progress, and Major Nesbitt, who had recently gone to the front with his corps, "Nesbitt's Horse," asked for my services and offered me a lieutenant's commission. Naturally, I jumped at the chance, so the situation was saved.

I was authorized to raise some men, so I returned to Graaff Reinet. Within a few days fifty nondescript recruits had flocked to my

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standard. At the same time "Ted" Slater, afterwards well known at Bulawayo, was enrolling men at Port Elizabeth. We joined forces and started for Tembuland.

The season was early summer and the weather was very unsettled. We had neither tents nor mackintoshes until such were served out to us at King William's Town. In the meantime, when on the line of march, we lay out during several nights of pelting rain. The men—especially those enrolled at Port Elizabeth—were a very mixed lot, a large proportion being town loafers and wastrels. Quite half of them could not ride; probably the same proportion had never fired a rifle. The greater number avoided being sober whenever possible. I will never forget one occasion, on the road between Grahamstown and King William's Town, when I for the first time gave an order to my troop to canter. The result was a screamingly funny display. All formation was immediately lost, about a dozen of the troopers rolled incontinently off, several dozen more lurched forward and frantically clasped the necks of their respective mounts. Quite a long time elapsed before the legionaries could be collected and the march resumed.

One amusing story went the round of the camp-

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fires. One of the men (he was, of course, Irish) was on horse-guard on a certain afternoon. He had strict orders to bring the horses to camp before sundown, for we meant to travel the next stage by moonlight. The sun went down, but the horses were not brought back. However, they were not far away, so they were easily found and driven up. But the man who was supposed to be in charge was missing. Just as dusk was falling, a shot was heard; soon afterwards the guard turned up with the carcass of a large horned owl.

"What have you got there, Billy?" shouted some one.

"A square-faced turkey," was the reply.

"That's not a turkey; it's an owl."

"Oh, begor, it isn't too ould to ate!"

Billy had gone to sleep under a bush. He was awakened by the hooting of the owl just over his head. His carbine was at hand, so he quietly put the muzzle within a few inches of the luckless bird and fired.

My men were not prepossessing; if one could imagine an averaged selection of Captain Henry Morgan's buccaneers on horseback, it would give a fair notion of their appearance. In King William's Town there was a very irascible old

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Commissariat officer, Captain Hood. He and I had several heated passages over equipment disputes, but in time we got things fairly well straightened out. Just before starting, my men were lined up before the Commissariat Office. In bidding farewell to Captain Hood I asked him what he thought of them.

"Well," he replied, after a meditative pause, "I think that if you were to rake hell with a fine tooth-comb, that's the sort of crowd you'd collect." Nevertheless, after being licked into shape, these men turned out to be a very useful lot. But they had to be kept away from drink—in the vicinity of a town they were apt to become quite unmanageable.

We traversed the Transkei and ultimately joined Wavell's column near Bashee Hoek, in Tembuland. For some time we patrolled that lovely country between the Umtata River and the present site of the Engcobo Magistracy. There was very little fighting, but a good deal of cattle-looting, hut-burning, and occasional killing. I was too young, in those days, to be critical; consequently, I enjoyed the whole adventure thoroughly.

I remember, however, one occurrence that made my blood run cold. I was detailed with twenty

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of my men to burn the huts and destroy the corn in the pits of a certain valley, which the enemy had just vacated. There were a large number of huts, most of them situated upon a terrace at one side of the valley. Just as one hut—a particularly large one—was being fired, something prompted me to look inside. To my horror, it contained four ancient crones who had been left behind, as is often done by savages under such circumstances, to fend for themselves. Three of these unhappy creatures were quite incapable of movement; the fourth could only just hobble. We spared a hut for their use, and put them into it, with some food. Needless to say, I gave strict orders that in the future all huts were to be examined before being fired.

Eventually hostilities with the Tembus came to an end. As a matter of fact we had captured all their cattle, and the unhappy people were in hiding in the forests, whence they seldom emerged and where the cover was too dense for us to penetrate. Most of their women and children had been bestowed in the deep, timbered gorges which lie between the foothills of the Drakensberg. We accordingly received orders to join Carrington's column in Basutoland.

These orders reached us when we were camped

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near the blackened ruins of the All Saints' Mission Station at the foot of the Bazaya Mountain. I well remember the occasion of a walk I took through one of the forests close to this spot. Hearing voices, I altered my course to the left. In a small clearing I found four youngsters—they had all been recruited by Ted Slater at Port Elizabeth—gathered around a fire. From a tripod formed of rough poles, newly felled, hung a bucket of seething water, and in this was bobbing about a human head, that of a native who had been killed a few days previously. The lads wanted the skull as a trophy.

We had practically left the area of hostilities when a dispatch reached Colonel Wavell informing him that two hundred men belonging to a corps called "The Cape Town Rangers" had refused to march from Clarkbury, a mission station some forty odd miles in our rear. These men should have joined our column for the purpose of accompanying us to Basutoland. It was an awkward situation; Tembuland had been practically evacuated by our forces. There were, in fact, with the exception of the "Cape Town Rangers," no troops in our rear except some Fingo levies. I had been, for a short time,

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galloper on Colonel Wavell's staff, and he knew that I was familiar with legal procedure. To my astonishment I was selected to return and preside at the trial of these men for refusal to obey orders. The "Ranger" officers had not, of course, joined the men in their disobedience, so I carried with me a blank commission in which the names of two of them were to be inserted, for the purpose of forming the court.

When the orders reached me I was, physically, in a sorry case. A few hours previously I had gone to bathe at a certain waterfall. There, when stark-naked, I had disturbed a hornet's nest. As a result I got severely stung. Five of the insects had attacked my legs, so my usually somewhat attenuated members were swollen to such an extent that I was unable to don my riding breeches. However, there was nothing for it but to start at once, so I saddled up, tied my boots and breeches to the crupper of my saddle and fixed two loops of rope to support my sausage-shaped feet, which were actually too swollen to insert in the stirrups.

I had to ride through a country in which the enemy were now roaming about in small parties, for as we retired they emerged from the mountain fastnesses for the purpose of endeavouring to

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find some corn in the pits. But there was only one small patch of forest to traverse, and I felt fairly sure that the Tembus were too demoralized to attack. Accordingly, when my Commander asked me whether I wished for an escort, and I could clearly see that it would be a great inconvenience to give me one, I decided to take only my orderly.

I started at about four o'clock in the afternoon. We rode through the night, saddling off at about midnight on the top of a bare hillock. Here I was able to dress, the swelling of my members having subsided. Far and near the surrounding heights were starred with fires; occasionally we could hear distant shouts. After an hour's rest we proceeded on our way. Soon we crossed the patch of forest: this was rather a nervous experience, for it was almost certain that it contained natives. Just after sunrise we passed through a row of kopjes. My eye caught the glint of metal on one of these, and on looking carefully I distinctly saw a man with a gun crawl forward and lean over a stone, from which he commanded, at a distance of about a hundred and fifty yards, the only course practicable for me to take. My orderly and I both carried carbines. I decided not to attack the man, provided he

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left me alone. When we got nearly opposite where he was lying, we bent down on our horses' necks and galloped. No shot was fired. Probably the man with the gun had no ammunition. But I was glad I had left him alone. We reached Clarkbury, having travelled nearly fifty miles early in the afternoon.

I found a somewhat serious state of things. The "Cape Town Rangers" were in a state of flagrant mutiny. They were camped on the hillside below the mission station, and a large number were still in possession of their arms. The officers had completely lost control. A few hundred yards away was a small detachment of Fingo levies. Many of the men were drunk; fortunately, however, they appeared to be good-tempered. I strolled about among the tents, chatting to the men and endeavouring to persuade them to return to duty. Had they consented to do this, I would, on my own responsibility, have stopped the criminal proceedings and marched them after the column. But they absolutely refused to go to Basutoland.

The officers were more under the influence of drink than the men. There was one exception, but he was a mere boy—far too young to be of any use at this crisis. The first thing to

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do was to disarm the mutineers—an operation requiring the exercise of a great deal of diplomacy. By seven o'clock next morning this had been effected without violence. There was apparently a lot of liquor in the tents, for a scoundrel of a trader, scenting profit, had brought in a wagonload of strong drink, and the men had recently been paid. I was, subsequently, delighted to hear that this trader's wagon was completely looted after I took my departure.

At eleven o'clock on the following forenoon the trial took place. The men were marched out of the camp under their own officers to a spot on the open hillside. They numbered a hundred and eighty-six. Nearly all were more or less under the influence of drink; the officers were by no means sober. It was a strange and motley crowd that faced the packing-case doing duty as a judicial bench. Every nationality, every grade, every type of scoundrelism seemed to be represented in those disreputable ranks—the sweepings, as they were, of the Cape Town docks. My own hard-bitten troopers were, by comparison, angels of light.

I attempted to line the men up, but they would not keep any sort of formation. They lolled about, they sat in groups, passing bottles of

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poisonous "dop" from mouth to mouth. Some sang comic songs; once or twice, during the proceedings, fights took place. But they were, on the whole, good-humoured—a circumstance for which I devoutly thanked my lucky star. Beyond an occasional ribald and uncomplimentary allusion to my personal appearance, they practically ignored me. As a matter of fact, they were not in a fit condition to realize the position in which they stood.

I had spent most of the previous night in drawing up the indictments and preparing other necessary documents. I read out the charge and asked the men to plead. The only response was a howl of derision. I then took some formal evidence from the more sober of the officers. My colleagues made ludicrous efforts to maintain an appearance of dignity, but soon one of them lolled forward on the packing-case, half-asleep, while the other wept copiously. My orderly sat mounted, holding my horse so that I could instantly spring into the saddle.

I stood up, and, purposely speaking in somewhat circumlocutory terms, found all the accused guilty. Then I passed sentence—six months' imprisonment with hard labour. A few of the men nearest to me leaped to their

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feet, but I vaulted into the saddle and rode for my life. After reaching a safe distance I reined in and looked round. The bench and my two colleagues formed the centre of a struggling, yelling crowd. Then, with a deep sense of relief, I rode as hard as I could for Idutywa, where I knew there was a telegraph station. From there I wired an account of what had taken place, and asked that an armed escort should be sent to take charge of the mutineers. I felt that I had passed through a somewhat dangerous crisis. In fact, I do not think I was ever in a tighter corner than the one in which I found myself that day at Clarkbury. It should be recorded that the culprits served their sentence.

I carried the record of the court-martial to King William's Town and handed it in at the Staff Office. Then I made for Basutoland; this involved a ride of about three hundred miles. The column was camped on the Boleka Ridge—a long, low oval with wide plains on three sides and a river valley on the fourth. Within a few miles, on three respective sides, arose the Phokwane, the Boleka, and the Tandjes Mountains, all of which were held by the enemy. Wavell's column had not been

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heard of, nor, as it happened, was it to be heard of for many weeks to come.

Things were at a standstill; it was a clear case of stalemate. We could not advance, for our men were not of the right stamp; I forget just how many our force numbered, but the figure must have run to several thousands. A commando of farmers, properly led, could easily have pushed matters to a finish. Such a commando would not, of course, have attacked strongholds, but it might have swept the country of cattle, burnt the villages, and harried the heart out of the enemy. Pretorius, with less than five hundred men, defeated Dingaan and broke the Zulu power.

As it was, the Basutos did the harrying. We used to make occasional patrols, engage the enemy at long range, lose a few men, and return to camp. On each of these occasions it would be reported that the enemy had lost heavily. Ridiculous statements were current to the effect that the Basutos used to carry iron hooks attached to ropes, and that they would fix these hooks in the bodies of the slain and drag the latter away. My firm opinion is that the enemy never lost more men than we did, and that on some occasions they did not lose so many.

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Our commander, General Clark, was not suited for his position. He would, no doubt, have been quite efficient as the commander of regular troops, but to command irregulars a special type of man is required. He must be very sympathetic and wholly unconventional. General Clark was not sympathetic; he kept all but his immediate staff at arms' length. Moreover, he was conventional to a degree—at least, so I was told, for I never made his acquaintance. Colonel Carrington was in those days an ideal leader of men such as ours. Had he been left unhampered in the early days of the campaign—the latter would have had a different ending. Carrington's "wood patrols"—expeditions ostensibly undertaken for the purpose of getting firewood, but really for the sake of fighting—were very popular with the column, in spite of the occasionally heavy cost in killed and wounded. But Carrington got badly wounded one day when returning to camp after one of his picnics, and then a period of deadly dullness set in.

The climax of our ineptitude came one morning when the enemy suddenly swooped down from the Boleka Mountain and got away with a large number of horses and cattle,

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among the former being all the mounts of the Cape Mounted Riflemen. This put the most efficient of our troops out of action for the time being. I, being unattached, and knowing something of the languages of the country, was sent down to assist in collecting remounts. My work lay principally in the Wodehouse district. After some weeks thus spent I delivered my horses to the officer in charge at Aliwal North, and then set out to look for my regiment.

At Aliwal North I had had to get rid of my dear old horse, the faithful companion of my long wanderings. He was a chestnut gelding with dark points, deep-chested, and with heavy quarters. It was a bitter wrench parting with him, but his legs had quite given out under the heavy strain, and it would have been cruelty to attempt to take him farther. I have never been on such friendly terms with any other animal as I was with him. His successors were several, and all were unsatisfactory.

I got a touch of ague at Aliwal North; this was followed by severe neuralgia in the head. For several days I was unable to eat or sleep. I trust the censorious will not mis-

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interpret what I am now about to relate. The day after starting on my search I passed a wayside inn. Here I halted for a space, for the purpose of giving my horse a feed. I felt wretchedly weak and ill. When paying for my forage over the bar I noticed, on the shelf, a pint bottle of champagne. On the spur of the moment I told the barman to open it. I drank off the contents, mounted, and rode off. Soon I found that the wine had gone badly to my head. My understanding was not affected, but I could not sit straight in the saddle. I looked up and saw one of Cobb & Co.'s coaches approaching. It was filled with passengers, who, when they noticed my unfortunate condition, made the welkin ring with derisive yells. So long as that horrible coach was in sight the inmates leant out of the window, waving hats and handkerchiefs. Here was I, who, in lieu of a paucity of positive virtues, had always prided myself on the negative one of sobriety, exposed tipsy, on the high-road to a lot of ribald ruffians from the diamond fields. It was an instance of real irony on the part of Fate.

In the meantime Wavell's wandering column was practically, lost. It was known to be

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floundering about somewhere among the rough foothills of the Drakensberg between Tembuland and Herschel. For many weeks it had not been heard of. At length I found it in hapless case camped on the eastern bank of the Kraai River. There had been an unusually heavy fall of snow in the Drakensberg, and the melting of this had turned all the rivers which had their birth in that range into roaring torrents. In those days bridges in South Africa were few and far between; east of Aliwal North they were non-existent.

On the western bank of the foaming Kraai I found the camp of a man I knew, Mr. Fred Wayland. Close by was a suitable ford, the track running diagonally with the stream. Owing to the weather having turned cold the snow had, for the time being, ceased to melt, so the water was comparatively low. The current took me to the waist, but I got through without much difficulty.

The camp was on a muddy terrace, close to the river bank. The succession of long delays at the various rivers had caused demoralization throughout all ranks. Drunkenness was lamentably common, for the town of Barkly East was only about nine miles away, and

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men used to slip through the lines at night and return with liquor before daylight. The officers were as much demoralized as the men.

A few days after I rejoined the column it became necessary to send a dispatch to Aliwal North. It was broadly hinted that as I had crossed the river once, I might as well do so again. Accordingly I volunteered for the service. But I could not attempt to cross at the place where I had done so before; the ford I had used could not be negotiated from the eastern bank, for this would have involved going diagonally *against* the current, which was a very different thing to going *with* it. Moreover, the weather had turned warm again, and the consequent melting of the snow had caused the flood to rise once more.

As my horse was not very powerful, I accepted the loan of one from a brother officer. This animal was said to be a good swimmer. I chose a long, deep reach for my endeavour, trusting to be able to find a place where I could climb out among the trees on the opposite bank. But the stream was running like a millrace and I was soon whirled past the spot where I had expected to land. Moreover, the horse turned out to be a wretched

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swimmer; after being in the water a few seconds he began to paw the air, so I had to slip off and swim at his side, holding the reins.

After having been taken by the current some five hundred yards past the place where I had hoped to land, I managed to steer my steed to a narrow opening in the heavy fringe of trees with which the river bank was covered. As soon as he got foothold the horse stood stock still, blocking up my only way of exit. The water, which was mainly recently melted snow, was perishingly cold, and I felt blue all over. Fortunately, a piece of stick with a sharp end floated down on the current. I seized this and savagely gored the horse in the belly with it. He then crawled out. But I was in very evil case, for the icy wind cut me like a knife and I was rapidly turning stiff. I started for Fred Wayland's tent at a shambling run; it was only with great difficulty that I managed to reach it. Wayland, like a good Christian, helped me to strip off my wet clothes. Then he covered me up with blankets and gave me a pannikin of hot coffee strongly laced with brandy. Had Wayland's tent not been at hand I think I

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must have died. I sent the dispatch on, but did not recross the river until next day. But then I swam alone; I had had enough of the borrowed horse.

About a fortnight after this adventure the snow had all melted, and accordingly, within a few hours the river fell to fordable point. Then the column crossed, and we made our way to Aliwal North. By permission of the Orange Free State authorities we passed over the Orange River Bridge, and thus had the latter between us and the town. But the men had plenty of money, and, owing to bad management and the failure of a number of more or less drunken officers to carry out orders, several hundred of the "toughest" members of the column got into town. At about nine o'clock that night we heard a number of shots. Soon afterwards Captain Hunt, the Resident Magistrate, came tearing down to the bridge on horseback, with a drawn sword in his hand. In the most indignant and impassioned terms he called upon Colonel Wavell to collect his men and bring them back to camp. More and more shooting could be heard. It was evident that something serious was happening in the town. But

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it was difficult to know what to do, for very few of either the officers or the men were sober. I was dog-tired, having been on duty the previous night, but I now felt bound to take a hand. So I slung on my revolver and, in my shirt-sleeves, made for the bridge.

Before I got half-way across I was overtaken by Captain de Burgh, Colonel Wavell's chief Staff officer.

"Here, Scully," he said, "go back to the bridge entrance. Don't let any one cross the river from camp. Shoot the first man that tries to force his way through. Stay there until I return."

I stood, like Horatius, holding the bridge in the brave hours of that winter's night. The wind was bitterly cold; I would have given a five-pound note for my tunic. For three hours I endured martyrdom—a curious reward for keeping sober. It was nearly daybreak before Aliwal was cleared of the troopers. They had acted disgracefully, looting right and left and breaking into houses. Several had been shot dead, quite a number were wounded. One or two had been captured and lodged in gaol on a charge of murder. I fancy that even to this day the memory of Wavell's

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column is execrated in Aliwal North. A few years since I lunched with General Wavell in London, at one of the big military clubs—I forget which—and I found that he still remembered the circumstance that out of a column over a thousand strong, one other officer and myself were the only two found sober on the fateful night when Aliwal North was looted.

When we reached Basutoland we found the Headquarter column still camped on the Boleka Ridge. The stalemate had evidently become chronic. Something like general demoralization reigned. Wholesale desertions depleted the ranks of the Cape Mounted Riflemen. An officer had actually deserted. It was said that he met on the Orange Free State border a Basuto who had run through our lines during the previous night and was waiting for night again to fall so that he could return. To this man the deserter presented his sword and revolver, telling him to go back and fight for his country. I do not guarantee this story; I tell it as it was told to me. But the general demoralization and the desertions can be vouched for.

“Nesbitt's Horse” did not camp with the main column, but at the foot of the “White

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Kopje," about three-quarters of a mile away, where we joined the 2nd Yeomanry Regiment. The kopje was a cockscomb-shaped ridge—bare, rugged, and abrupt; it commanded a deep valley. An officer and thirty men did picket duty on its summit every night, a detail which was much dreaded. The nights were cold, and one could get no shelter among the boulders from the searching wind. Moreover, the ridge did not contain a single level spot upon which to stretch one's limbs. One night, when in charge of the picket, I wrapped myself in a blanket and lay down in a cleft. On a ledge above my head I set a patrol-tin which contained water. A field-rat, scenting the water, overturned the tin, and the three—rat, tin, and water—fell with a clatter on my head. I had just gone to sleep, and awoke in a terrible fright.

The most responsible of all posts that an officer could hold was that of cattle-guard for the day. In this capacity he was responsible for the safety of all the horses and transport animals of the column. As the season advanced and the veld became sere under the cold winds of winter, the animals had to be depastured farther and farther afield. On one

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occasion, when cattle-guard officer, I posted a strong patrol under an experienced sergeant-major at the foot of the Phokwane Mountain (which was occupied by the enemy), and ordered him to keep well on the alert. On returning from a round in another direction, I saw, to my horror, a lot of horses straying up one of the gorges, beyond the line on which I had posted the patrol. The latter could not be found. My orderly and I drove back the horses, expecting every moment to be sniped. However, fortunately for us, the enemy were not in evidence. I afterwards found the experienced sergeant-major and his men playing cards at the bottom of a deep donga.

Not long afterwards, on the very next occasion when I took charge of the stock, the enemy made a swoop for the horses at about the middle of the forenoon. They poured in force over the Phokwane, and the big guns at the camp began to play on them. These guns were 70 lb. howitzers. After delivering my charges at one end of the laager—the entrance to which was so crowded with animals that it was impossible to effect an entrance there—I galloped for the other end,

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passing along the northern face, from which the guns were firing. As bad luck would have it, one of the guns was discharged at the moment at which I was passing it. The muzzle was so much elevated that the shell passed far over my head, but the concussion was so severe that it sent my horse and myself rolling over, and injured the drum of my ear, causing permanent partial deafness.

Soon afterwards a peace was patched up, on the basis of Basutoland reverting to Imperial rule. An indemnity of some thousands of cattle was imposed by us and agreed to by Lerothodi, the Basuto chief, with his tongue in his cheek. The cattle were the most miserable specimens. Ancient kine and superannuated oxen trooped languidly in—innocent victims of this strange climax to a preposterous conflict. For of the many wickedly unnecessary wars that South Africa has seen, surely that waged with the Basuto nation was one of the most unjustifiable. From the day when they became British subjects, after their long struggle with the Orange Free State, these people had loyally abided by the terms of their treaty of submission. When we required Basuto labour for our railways and our mines

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we employed them on the distinct understanding that they were to be allowed to acquire guns. Permits legalizing the delivery of such guns were issued by duly authorized officers of the Colonial Government. The morality or expediency of permitting the Basuto nation to be thus armed is quite beside the question. When the Orange Free State Government tried to prevent armed Basutos traversing its territory, we induced the Imperial authorities to open the way for them by means of an ultimatum. Then, for no admissible reason, we ordered them to give their guns up. There was not the slightest reason for supposing that such guns would ever be used against the Colony; even had there been, such reason must have existed before the guns were procured by the natives. In any case the circumstances bound us to abide by our contract.

But Sir Gordon Sprigg, who was then Prime Minister of the Cape, thought otherwise. He went to Basutoland, held a "pitso," or general assembly of the people, told them he was "master of the Colony," and that he had decided to disarm them. Every one possessing any knowledge of Basuto history knew that any attempt at disarmament would be resisted ;

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that even if the chiefs agreed to it the people would never consent. Those who expressed such views—which are now almost universally admitted to have been the right ones—were branded as traitors by that party which, in every State, is always in favour of any war, because it sets money in circulation. Several men now in prominent positions of trust were more or less publicly accused of being in treasonable communication with the enemy. We were beaten in the struggle, as we richly deserved to be, and the Basutos retained their arms.

The column—or the larger part of it—had to remain in the field until such time as the balance of the debilitated indemnity should be paid. But as active service was at an end I decided to return to civil employment. Accordingly I resigned my commission and started on my three-hundred-mile ride back to Graaff Reinet. It was, of course, impossible for me to return to Aberdeen. When I reported my arrival to Cape Town by telegraph, I was instructed to proceed to Seymour, in the district of Stockenstrom, and there assume duty as sole clerk to the local Civil Commissioner and Resident Magistrate.

CHAPTER VI

Stockenstrom—Its situation—Seymour—The Katberg Forest—Its destruction by fire—Natural beauties—Human inhabitants—Quaint characters—Old Flannigan—Old Connelly—"Columbus Cook a schamer"—"Me and Jack Pattherson"—The Rev. Purdon Smailes—His pictures—"You fool! that's Seymour!"—A bridegroom's unusual promise—Tale of a marriage licence—"Too much learning hath made thee mad"—The revivalist—Souvenirs from a dog's tail—The brothers B.—"There are Churchmen and Churchmen, you know"—The Great Comet of 1882.

THE district of Stockenstrom, formerly known as the Kat River Settlement, has an interesting history. Moreover, its bounds include some of the loveliest scenery in South Africa. The Amatole Range, which sweeps round its series of forested slopes and terraces from where the Keiskamma River takes its source, culminates in the Hog's Back, where the Chumie River is born. Then it makes a kink to westward and flings back a sickle-shaped chain of delectable mountains which connect it with the Great Winterberg. The district of Stockenstrom lies within the bend of the chain, the



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more salient links of which are Gaika's Kop, the Eland's Berg, the Katberg, and the Didima.

When I went to Seymour—which name is the modern and trivial substitute for “Eland's Post,” the term by which the old fort and military barracks used to be known—many of the deep gorges cleaving the lofty mountain range were still brimming with virgin forest. Since then most of these delightful spots have been completely gutted by fire, for a succession of severe droughts set in and the undergrowth turned into so much tinder. When last I gazed into the mighty basin up to then known as the Great Katberg Forest, it seemed as though a mental picture I had formed in childhood of the entrance to the infernal regions was realized. The whole mountain tract had been swept by the besom of fire a few weeks previously. What I remembered as a fairyland or many-hued greenery was then a black, convoluted chasm, with here and there a tiny whorl of smoke arising from some prone giant, not yet completely charred. One pathetic circumstance connected with the fire was this: that all the blue buck in the forest were burnt to death. I had often, when botanizing, or dreaming in some remote dell,

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watched these little creatures stealing, mouse-like, among the undergrowth. So compelling is the love of these animals for the woodland, that they will face death in any form rather than leave it.

But now, so I am told, the scenery of the Katberg is once more enchanting, for the greenery has again sprung up, dense and rank, though from its tangled maze of fern, shrub, and creeper stand out, gaunt and black, the trunks of those mighty forest monarchs which, although they died the fiery death, were enabled by their bulk to stand erect until the sky, in belated pity, sent rain to quench their flames. If man, the ruthless enemy of all natural beauty, could be banished from this tract for a thousand years, the forest might revive. I have not set eyes on those hills and valleys for many seasons, nor do I want to behold them again. This tract strongly impressed the imagination of the poet Pringle; several of his best verses owe their inspiration to its lovelier spots.

This vast amphitheatre—this garden of the gods in which immemorial trees, festooned with foam-like *Usnea* moss and lace-like orchids, reared their infinitely varied symmetry

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aloft from beds of luxuriant fern—where forest-nurtured waterfalls leaped white from ledge to ledge—where herds of noble wild beasts roamed unscathed of weapons forged by man's sinister ingenuity, was the stronghold of the great kaffir chief Makomo. But the interests of the white colonists demanded that the kaffirs should be driven forth, and when this had been effected Governor Sir Lowry. Cole caused the Kat River Valley to be cut up into between twenty and thirty sites for villages, each with a large commonage attached. Therein were settled several thousand Hottentots and coloured people of mixed descent. This happened in 1829.

When I went to Stockenstrom in the early part of 1882, about half the land (the better half, naturally) had fallen into the hands of European farmers, but the remainder was held by descendants of the original grantees. Many of the holders were deeply in debt. There can be no doubt that the original stock will be totally eliminated in course of time.

Of all the various places at which I have been stationed, Seymour—including, of course, its environs—contained the largest proportion of quaint characters. Chief among these were

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the discharged soldiers who had married widows of original grantees or else female heirs to the land. These old soldiers were, with scarcely an exception, very prosperous, but almost as invariably their descendants turned out to be quite worthless. So long as one of the parents lived the property was kept together, but the death of the last surviving parent was usually the signal for litigation among the heirs and consequent disruption of the estate.

I well remember the keen, hatchet-like visage of old Flannigan; he hailed from the north of Ireland, and was a terrible man for driving a bargain. Whenever he visited Seymour Flannigan dressed in black broadcloth and wore a white choker, but he invariably walked the eighteen miles distance from and back to his home, barefoot, with his boots slung from his stick. At the entrance to the village was a certain stone, and on this the old man would always sit down for the purpose of putting his boots on. He would remove his footgear at the same spot on starting for home.

Another interesting character was old Connelly. He lived in the village, and was my landlord for nearly two years. He could

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neither read nor write, but was greedy for knowledge, the items of which he occasionally mixed in a wonderful way. He held Ireland in intense affection. I remember once telling old Connelly about America having been discovered by voyagers from Iceland long before the days of Ferdinand and Isabella, and of Iceland having been occupied, in very early times, by the Irish Culdees. I fear I must have left him under the impression that an Irishman had discovered America. After ruminating for a time he said—

“Ah, I always thought that fellow Columbus Cook was a schamer.”

Old Connelly began life as a ploughboy, but one day a recruiting sergeant came along and he took the shilling. When in garrison somewhere in the north of England he ran away with a servant-girl, and married her at Gretna Green. However, he soon had to part from his bride, whom he never heard of again. Taking his discharge in South Africa after one of the old kaffir wars, he wandered to the banks of the Kat River and there essayed successfully to dry the tears of a recently bereaved widow who owned a fertile piece of land, and was, in spite of her brown

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hue, of comely appearance. Shortly after I made old Connelly's acquaintance he became a widower, and he met the bereavement with that philosophy which was his special characteristic.

Old Connelly was well off for a man of his class. The dearest wish of his heart was to have a Roman Catholic church built at Seymour, and towards this object he presented Bishop Ricards, of Grahamstown, with a valuable building lot in the village. After transfer of the site had been effected, he caused many letters to be written to the Bishop, urging that the building of the church should be undertaken without delay. In due course the Bishop, while on one of his pastoral visitations, turned aside from his course and paid Seymour a visit.

"Well, Mr. Connelly," he said, "supposing I build a church, what support can I expect from the congregation; how many Catholics are there in the district?"

"Well," replied old Connelly, after thoughtfully scratching his head for several seconds, "there's me and Jack Pattherson."

These would have formed the whole congregation. "Jack Pattherson," it should be mentioned, was an aged and infirm pauper

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who was in receipt of relief from the public funds.

But by far the most extraordinary character in the district was the Reverend Purdon Smailes. He was the incumbent of the local Wesleyan Church. A remarkably clever man, Mr. Smailes had made all knowledge his province. He bore a strong physical resemblance to the late Thomas Carlyle; I fancy from what I have read of the Chelsea sage that there must have been a resemblance in point of temper too, for Mr. Smailes had the courage of his convictions, and the latter were apt to be—well—violent. He used to stroll about the village wearing a most dilapidated straw hat and a brown stuff dressing-gown, much the worse of wear, and roped around his waist after the manner of a monk's habit. Small boys whom he suspected of Sabbath-breaking and he were natural enemies. Among other things he was an artist. Soon after my arrival at Seymour my Chief's wife warned me that one day Mr. Smailes would show me his pictures, and that these included one of Seymour.

"It is not a bit like Seymour," she said, "but be sure to recognize it, or else the old gentleman will be hurt and offended."

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Some time afterwards I met Mr. Smailes close to his house. We engaged in conversation, and he asked me if I were fond of pictures. I replied in the affirmative, and he invited me to his study. I at once bethought me of the warning I had received and determined to be careful. Picture after picture was exhibited; fortunately, so far they were of places with which I was not familiar. At length he produced a large canvas and said—

“There, what do you think of that?”

I regarded it carefully; I made a rapid circle of the village in imagination, visualizing it mentally from every point. Could that be Seymour? No, I decided, the wildest flight of fancy could not connect that presentment with this village.

“No, Mr. Smailes, I have never seen that place.”

“You fool!” he said, giving me a vicious dig in the ribs. “Why, that’s Seymour!”

“Of course,” I said apologetically; “how could I have been so stupid! By the way, from which side is the view taken?”

“From the top of the Menziesberg,” he said. The Menziesberg is a high, abrupt mountain overlooking the village.

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"Ah, I see," I rejoined; "but how energetic of you to climb up so high to get the view."

"Climb up the Menziesberg," he said scornfully; "how can you think I'd be such a fool as to do that! I flew up there in imagination, of course."

Soon afterwards Mr. Smailes was superannuated on account of advanced age. However, during the occasional periods of absence on the part of his successor, he used to conduct services. I once heard him state from the pulpit that it was a far greater sin to go to a dance than to get drunk. On another occasion he had to marry a couple. He took the bridegroom in hand, speaking to him with great severity and in an extremely loud tone—

"To love."

"To love," followed the bridegroom.

"To honour."

"To honour."

"And to obey."

The bridegroom jibbed at this, attempting to explain that the Marriage Service did not require him to make such a promise. But Mr. Smailes, who was very deaf, became extremely irascible.

"Look here," he roared, "do you want to

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get married or not? If you won't promise to obey I will not marry you."

The bridegroom meekly surrendered. He promised to obey—probably realizing that he would have to do so in any case—and a wave of laughter passed through the congregation, for the church was crowded.

While on the subject of marriage I will relate an incident which took place a few years ago in one of the larger towns of the Cape Colony. A certain couple who held a good social position desired to get married according to the civil form, so they appeared before the Resident Magistrate, answered the required questions, subscribed to the necessary declarations, and obtained a special licence. This authorized any Resident Magistrate or clergyman to perform the marriage ceremony.

But the couple, on receiving the licence, duly signed and sealed, concluded that they were married and departed on their honeymoon. Upon returning a friend, who had an inkling as to the real state of the case, went to the bridegroom and asked where he had been married.

"Before the magistrate, of course," was the reply.

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"Would you mind showing me your marriage certificate," asked the friend.

The licence was produced, whereupon the friend pointed out that the document was only an authority to marry. The situation was immediately realized, and I believe the distance to the residence of the nearest parson was covered in record time.

One of Mr. Smailes's favourite sciences was astronomy; he was so familiar with the heavenly bodies that one might have thought he went up occasionally and whitewashed them. One evening he delivered a lecture on the Milky Way, and, after having given some more than ordinarily astounding data as to stellar distances, he paused for a few seconds, regarded the audience fixedly, and said—

"My friends, methinks I hear you say, 'Purdon Smailes, too much learning hath made thee mad.'"

Seymour was a gay little place at one time. Dances often took place in the court-room. Many of the girls danced excellently; one in particular was the best partner I ever waltzed with; her step suited mine to perfection. But a religious revival stirred the village to its depths, and all the girls came to regard

Further Reminiscences of a

dancing as a deadly sin. The revivalist was a sentimental-looking young man with very black hair. He remained for a long time, and his departure was the occasion of many tears; my one-time partner was among those who seemed to feel the loss most keenly. I watched him mount the post-cart and drive away, down a street full of fluttering handkerchiefs.

Just afterwards I saw a large black retriever dog which belonged to a friend of mine, trotting down the street. I called the animal into my office and cut all the long hair off its tail. Then I purchased a quantity of narrow blue ribbon. With true-lover's knots I tied up a number of locks of the hair I had filched. These I put into envelopes, and, imitating the revivalist's handwriting, directed one to each of the bereaved damsels. I sent the lot down to a village through which the traveller would pass, and there had them posted. I believe the locks gave great comfort, and were kept for a long time as treasured souvenirs.

There were two brothers named B. in the village. One was named William, the other Bill. William was mayor, and the richest man in the settlement. He owned the only hotel, and was the main support of the local

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Anglican Church. Formerly William B. and his family had been Wesleyans, but a near relative of his died and Mr. Smailes announced from the pulpit that in his opinion the lot of this individual in the other world was a sultry one, so the B. family became Anglicans. In Church matters the word of William B. was absolute law. It was his liberal subscription to the funds that, literally, kept the institution going. At one time he insisted on personally conducting the choir. His way of opening proceedings was this—after getting the members into their respective places he would rap the bench with his knuckles and call out—
“Now, then, children—Hof!”

Once Mr. B. took a particularly outrageous line in some Church matter. This elicited from Mr. Shaw, the rector, the remark that he did not consider Mr. B. to be a Churchman. B. heard of this, so he promptly wrote withdrawing his subscription. Some other members of the congregation went to the rector and urged upon him the advisability of apologizing. Mr. Shaw, excellent man though he was, was not remarkable for tact. His apology took a somewhat peculiar form. Meeting the aggrieved one, he said—

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"Mr. B., I said you were no Churchman. Well, I withdraw that; I admit that you are a Churchman, but—there are Churchmen and Churchmen, you know."

However, Mr. B. was apparently satisfied, for he continued to subscribe, and the Church weathered the storm.

"Bill" B. followed the calling of a blacksmith. He was, unfortunately for himself, one of the most assiduous customers at his brother's hotel bar.

I believe that I was the first person who noticed the Great Comet of 1882. I was sitting up in a sick-room, and went out about 2 a.m. to get a breath of fresh air. Just over the Eland's Berg I noticed a star with a blur at its side. I at once recognized it as a comet, and called the attention of another watcher to it. Not for six days afterwards did any public notice of the wonderful visitor appear. I shall never forget the appearance of this phenomenon towards the end of September. I often used to rise at 2 a.m., wander to a hill outside the village, and there feast my eyes on the Great Comet, which was stretched, in shape like an ostrich-feather, across about a quarter of the space between horizon and horizon.

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Photo by

TABLE MOUNTAIN, FROM THE CAPE TOWN DOCKS.

[Colmar Wocke.]

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CHAPTER VII

I am transferred to Cape Town—Professor MacOwan—Table Mountain—Abdul and the Mahdi—Nights on the mountain—Glorious scenery—Dangers of the mountain—The signals—Wealth of flowers—The contemplated census—My disappointment—"Fernando Po, his brother"—"Why, 'e's one of our young men"—Return to Stockenstrom—Botanical work—Natural history collections—South African butterflies—Their special interest.

TOWARDS the end of 1882 I was transferred to Cape Town as a clerk in the Colonial Secretary's office. I at once began the study of botany under Professor MacOwan. Every day I used to take my sandwiches over to the Professor's little office in the Botanic Gardens at lunch-time, and there receive instruction until the time came for returning to my regular work. It was not only in respect of plants that I was taught during those delightful hours, for Mr. MacOwan was, without exception, the wisest and sanest man with whom I have ever come into contact, and he generously placed his ample store of sound, human philosophy at my disposal. His was a

Further Reminiscences of a

most beautiful character. Fortune, ever niggardly towards the wise, treated him as she usually treats those who are the salt of the earth. His position was, as he often said, that of a sort of head gardener ; as a matter of fact four-fifths of his invaluable time was taken up by the work of mere economic management. He was like a thoroughbred horse yoked to a grocer's dray.

Later he accepted an appointment in the Agricultural Department, hoping that at length he would have some leisure to devote to scientific work. But he soon found that he had stepped out of the frying-pan into the fire ; in his new office he had to deal with little else than trivial correspondence with farmers and gardeners, such as could more properly have been managed by some junior clerk at five shillings per day. He eventually retired on a pension of, I think, £80 per annum. I saw him, after we had not met for many years, a few weeks before his death. I found him still the same—cheerful, philosophical, and contented—looking on life through that lens of kindly cynicism he had always used. He was calmly awaiting the end, his only fear being that he might become helpless and thus be a burthen to others. But this he was spared. Professor MacOwan's work for South African

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TO VIND ARGENTINO

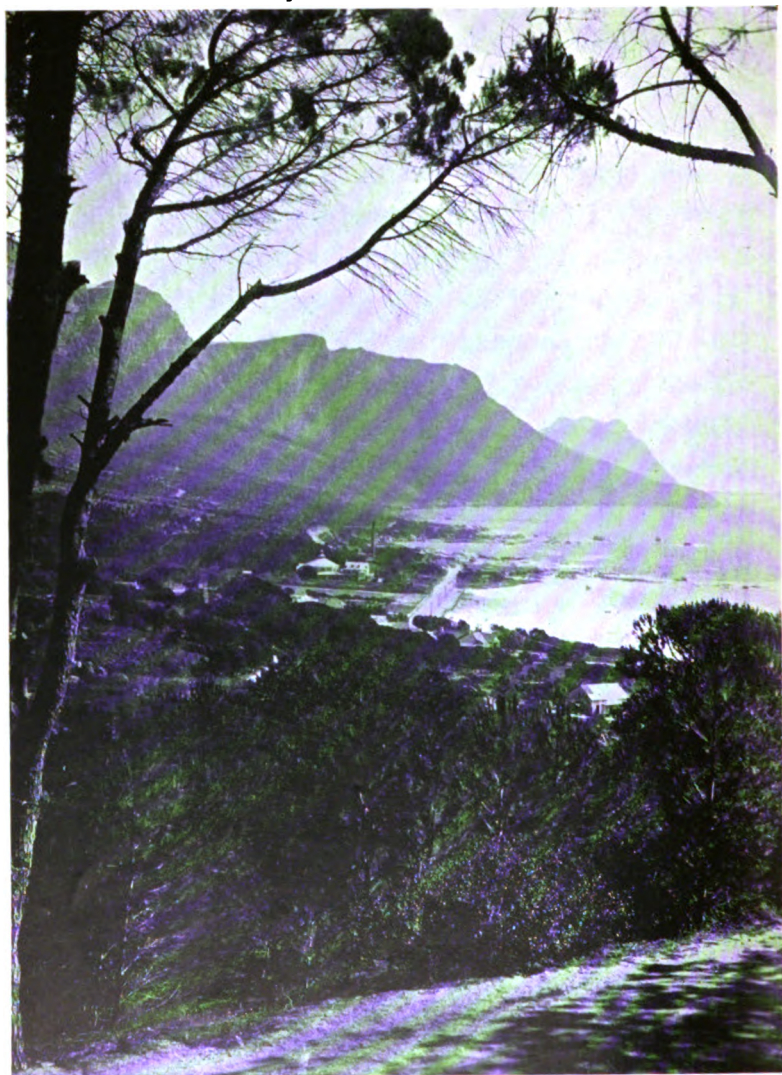


Photo by]

SOUTHWARD BLUFFS OF TABLE MOUNTAIN.

[Colmar Wocke.

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science has not been, and most probably never will be, adequately acknowledged.

During the year I spent in Cape Town I made seventeen ascents of Table Mountain. This kingdom of romance and mystery was then as yet wild and untamed ; one could still easily get lost among its many labyrinths. Now it has been disfigured by houses, plantations, and reservoirs, and the cut pathways which score its once-wild terraces always suggest to me cords binding a giant. My usual mountaineering companion, when I had one, was an old Malay named Abdul, who was often employed by Professor MacOwan as a plant collector. Abdul had a marvellous knowledge of the mountain ; in the thickest haze he always knew his way to the nearest refuge. Moreover, he knew, almost to a day, when the rarer plants were to be found in flower. A great deal of his lore he imparted to me.

Abdul was a firm believer in the mission of the Mahdi, who had then recently started on his remarkable career in the Sudan. Many an hour we have spent over the fire in one or other of the caves we inhabited from time to time, discussing the Prophet and the wonderful history of Islam. More especially was my companion

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interested in that mysterious descendant of Ali, the twelfth and latest of those imaums who, in poverty and obscurity, kept alive the spirit of Islam while the victorious Caliphs secured the temporary triumph, through the sword, of the flesh. Abdul, Sunnite though he was, believed as firmly as any Shi-ite in the saint who is said to have slept through the long, afflicted centuries in the Bagdad cavern, and was firmly and passionately convinced that the Mahdi, or guide, had at length appeared, and would overthrow the powers of evil. It was only his age that prevented Abdul from going to the Sudan and joining the Mahdi's banner. He tried hard to convince me of the truth of the Mahommedan creed.

Those nights on Table Mountain—who could ever forget them? Sometimes I would lie for hours on the very edge of the sheer western bluff, gazing spellbound from that majestic coign on the wonders around and beneath me. It happened to be the year of the Krakatoa eruption—when the dust with which the earth-wrapping atmosphere was charged for many months filled dawn and sunset with such marvellous hues. Often I have watched the west grow splendid with many-coloured flame reaching almost to the

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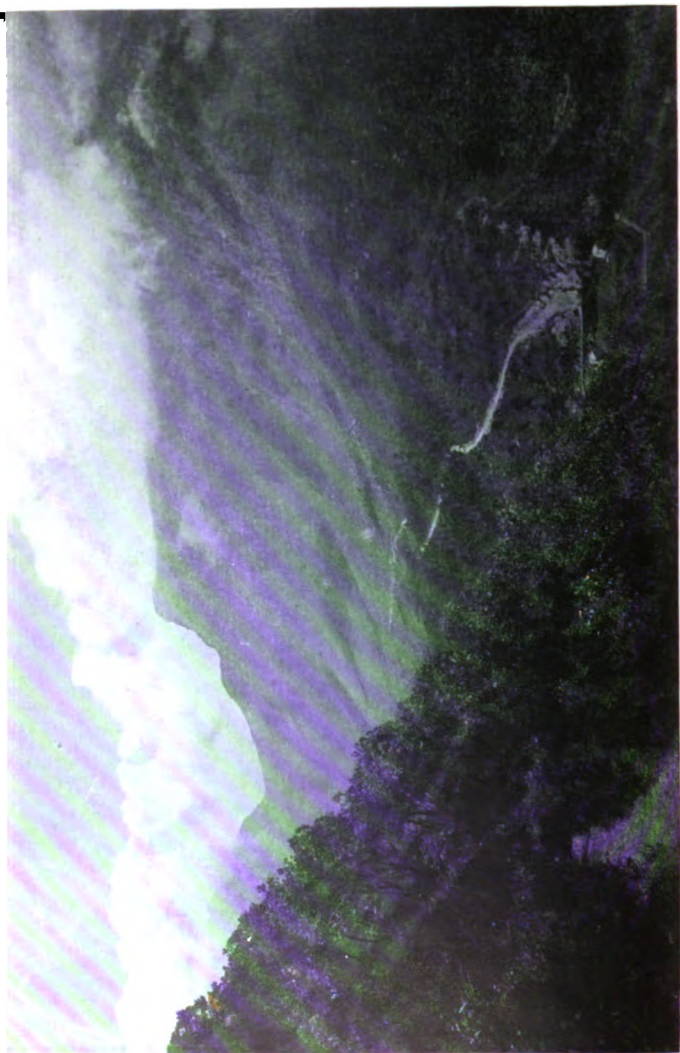


Photo by]

TABLE MOUNTAIN : ADVANCE OF A "BLACK SOUTH-EASTER."

Calmer 11 inch.

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zenith as evening fell, and then have seen it pale to an orange penumbra, from which stately columns, rose-tinted, built and unbuilt themselves in the deepening purple dome.

Wonderful, too, it was to follow the spangled tracery of the electric lights glint out over the silent city, which lay like a map outspread beneath, with the margins of the Bay, the Docks, and the Breakwater revealed in detail. Silence, exquisite in its completeness, reigned on those rare occasions when the wind sank to sleep, and one's ear, tuned to the sacred stillness, girded at the very pulses of one's own thankful heart.

Surely there are few lovelier or more varied land- or sea-scapes in the world than those visible from the summit of Table Mountain! Should the surfeit of beauty which one aspect gave prove oppressive, one had only to turn to another and thus let change bring rest to the perceptions; if the noble, sweeping curves of Table Bay cloyed, to turn to the stark peaks of the frowning Drakenstein and, when the sense of delight which the contrast brought became less acute, to gather in the varied wonders of False Bay and the rugged majesty of those mountainous, bronze-hued shores between which the sea intruded.

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And the aspects of these scenes changed with the journey of the sun, with the moving seasons, with the cloud-caprices of the sky. What an infinite difference there was between the landscape at midnight—when the gloom-robed mountains, far off or in the middle distance, seemed to come to life and stretch their limbs under the sumptuous stars—and at dawn when the stark, eastern ranges took fire from the yet-unarisen sun, and every gorge brimmed with opaline, purple shadow, while the level cornfields stretched in pallid and mysterious infinity from the northern shore of Table Bay.

Most wonderful of all, on a day clear as only a South African day can be, was the sapphire ocean with its faint border of gleaming foam flung like a mantle round the sleeping peninsula. Then it seemed as though Peace brooded over all like a dove, and that the term "Cape of Storms" was a misnomer.

But on days when the wind bayed through the heavens like a hunting pack, or turned the grey, tempest-carved turrets into screaming organ-pipes, one could picture the weather-beaten galleons, manned by the lion-hearted adventurers of a long-spiced day, labouring down the uncharted, iron-bound coast, or beating in for shelter against

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Photo by]

[Colmar Wacker.

TABLE MOUNTAIN FROM THE WESTWARD. SILVER-TREE IN FOREGROUND.

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the south-east gales. What music must have been the rumble of the hawser to those mariners when at length the anchorage was reached, and the long-unused flukes fell—to bite into sand never before disturbed by the agency of man.

And then the change from glad, smiling sunlight to dank, smothering vapour—vapour occasionally so dense that objects at a distance of six feet were almost invisible within its folds. This might happen in the twinkling of an eye, in the interval between bending down to examine a flower and again rising. It was under such circumstances that the unwary lost their lives—and of the lives of the unwary, Table Mountain has taken heavy toll. The bones of many a trapped wanderer have bleached among the iron fangs with which the Spirit of the Mountain fences its domain.

But to those who exercised careful vigilance there was but little danger. The mountain always gave warning—hung out some signal of its approaching change of mood which none might disregard with impunity. This might take the form of a filmy streamer undulating from the edge of the loftiest cliff—a gossamer tress trailing over the central plateau—the crest of a wind-billow

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breaking into visible foam when impact upon the eastern crag-rampart flung it aloft into some cooler stratum of atmosphere. It might be a small globe of snowy vapour hovering over the Devil's Peak, or poised, level with the mountain's summit, over the centre of Table Bay. To the superficial eye such a globe might seem to be at rest in its unchanging situation, but regarded carefully it would prove to be vortical and full of ebullition.

The signal might only be a slight alteration in the force or direction of the wind, accompanied by a scarcely perceptible change of temperature. But it was a warning, and as such had to be watched for and obeyed. One, then, had to make for one's camp without delay, or else find some well-worn footpath with the details of which one was familiar, and which led to the nearest of the three exits from the mountain maze. Otherwise one might have to choose between perishing in the cold and darkness where one was, and meeting death in a headlong fall over some tremendous cliff.

What a fairyland the mountain itself was! What joy it brought to discover some still, dreaming tarn ringed with great red *Disa* orchids, lolling, *Narcissus*-like, as though to kiss the loveli-

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TO VINU
ABSORBED



Photo by,

VIEW EASTWARD FROM SUMMIT OF TABLE MOUNTAIN.

[Colmar H. & Co.]

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ness of their own reflection. What a wealth of vivid colour, of rarest scent, of grace in form, was here strewn broadcast. How the scarlet *Crassulas* blazed in the rock-clefts; how the many-hued lilies and the sky-blue, foamed-lipped orchids glanced shyly from the moist peat-beds in which the wine-coloured rivulets were born. How the iris-plumed honey-birds dipped, seeking nectar, into the smoke-and-purple hued *Protea* chalices, and the ochre-tinted, blue-lunuled *Meneris* butterflies swept in swallow-strong flight from trove to trove of blossom treasures.

What a thrill it gave one to find on some ledge, fenced off by dangerous obstacles from less active searchers, rare flowers scarcely represented in the great herbaria of the world; perhaps ungathered since the days of Ecklon and Kunth. I remember finding, on one memorable occasion, seventeen different species of orchid in flower on such a ledge.

Not least of joys connected with the mountain was to lie snug in some cave, on a bed of springy fern, smoking the pipe of contentment and listening to the howling tempest that reigned outside, or occasionally to stand at the cave's mouth and gaze on the Brocken-spectre of one's shadow

Further Reminiscences of a

flung by the camp-fire on the dense, hurtling masses of vapour.

* * * * *

The taking of a census of the Cape Colony was in contemplation ; no such enumeration had been effected since 1865. A man named Pearson, who held some important post under the Board of Trade in London, was sent out at the request of the Colonial Government to advise as to the preliminary steps. Pearson and I became good friends ; he was a great admirer of Herbert Spencer, and I was at the time a more or less desultory student of the great synthetic philosopher. One day I was sent for by Mr. Hampden Willis, the Under Colonial Secretary, and offered the Directorship of the forthcoming census. I was struck dumb with surprise, and protested my inexperience. But Pearson said he would guarantee my being able to bring the work to a successful conclusion. So with many misgivings I allowed myself to be persuaded into acceptance.

Sir Thomas Scanlen, who was then Prime Minister, was also Colonial Secretary. A few days after the interview Mr. Willis again sent for me and said, with what I am sure was genuine regret, that Sir Thomas Scanlen had absolutely

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refused to consent to my appointment to the Directorship. Mr. Willis was exceedingly kind and sympathetic; he said he quite understood that after the rebuff I had received, I would not care to remain any longer in the department presided over by the Prime Minister, and that he would endeavour, so far as possible, to meet my wishes as to a transfer. I thus, early in my official career, lost a magnificent opportunity of getting to the top of the official tree by a short cut. As I was quite unknown to Sir Thomas Scanlen, I concluded that my friend Mr. Morton, of the Treasury, had put another spoke in my wheel. I could think of no one else who would have thus stabbed me in the dark.

An incident which took place at the Civil Service Club caused great amusement. The occasion was a farewell banquet which was given to the late Mr. Felix-Murray, of the Colonial Office, who was transferred to the office of the Agent-General in London. The chairman was a certain Cabinet Minister, and he, in proposing the health of the guest of the evening, used a certain poetical quotation. After the speaker sat down Felix Murray asked him the name of the poet whom he had quoted.

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"That quotation, sir, was from the poet Fernando Po."

"Surely," replied Murray, "you mean Edgar Allan Poe?"

"No, sir, I mean Fernando, his brother."

This undoubtedly genuine "howler" has always puzzled me. The man who perpetrated it had been educated at an English public school and possessed a certain amount of culture. He was quite unmistakably a gentleman. He never looked upon the wine when it was red. I am inclined to think that he made a slip in using the term "Fernando," and that his subsequent remark was meant as a joke. But I must admit that I never heard him attempt anything in the way of humour, and I knew him fairly well. However, I have given an unvarnished record of what took place.

There was a certain butler who put in a long term at Government House. During Sir Hercules Robinson's first term of office as Governor, Sir Walter Hely Hutchinson — then Mr. Hely Hutchinson — was one of his secretaries. Afterwards Sir Walter was appointed Governor of Natal. When the old butler saw the announcement of the appointment in the newspaper, he exclaimed—

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“What! 'Ely 'Utchingson! Why, 'e's one of our young men.”

As I had now become keenly interested in botany I applied to be sent back to Stockenstrom. The mountains there, with their sub-tropical richness of flora, offered a splendid field for investigation. My application was granted, so to Stockenstrom I returned, there taking up my former position. I now devoted myself very earnestly to botanical field-work. Every Sunday, and on week-days whenever I could manage to get out, I explored the mountains for the purpose of gathering plants. I kept up a constant correspondence with Professor MacOwan and supplied him with desiccated specimens of the rarer local flora for distribution to the larger herbaria of Europe and America.

Many days I spent wandering in the fairyland of the then unspoiled Katberg forests, gathering ferns, orchids, and other floral treasures. What a joy it was to find, deep in the remotest fold of some crag-surrounded, forest-filled valley, the wonder of some rare, seldom-flowering gardenia, and to gather into one's nostrils the lavished richness of its unparalleled perfume. It is sad, indeed, to think of these shrines of loveliness having been ruined by a

Further Reminiscences of a

cataclysm of fire—to realize that all the matchless beauty I knew so well has passed away for ever.

During a stay at King William's Town, whither I had been sent on special duty, I made the acquaintance of Mr. G. F. Scott Elliott, who has since become noted as a naturalist and a traveller in Africa and South America. He was an enthusiastic botanist, and I was able to supply him with many specimens of rare plants which he had had no opportunity of collecting. Through him I sent a valuable collection of named and mounted specimens to the herbarium of Edinburgh University. Afterwards I was elected an Honorary Fellow of that institution. The University at Upsala likewise benefited by my collections to a considerable extent. I also corresponded with the late J. G. Baker, of Kew, and sent him specimens of those monocotyledonous plants in which his soul delighted.

After a while I discovered something which I had long suspected. It was this: that although a good collector, I would never become a scientific botanist. This probably was due to such education as I possessed being sadly lacking in the matter of fundamentals. However, every trade requires hod-men, so a hod-man I was content

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to be to the master-builders of science. I extended my collecting activities to butterflies, beetles, and, in fact, to all sorts of insects and creatures known to those who do not collect as "bugs." I found several specimens, both animal and vegetable, which were new to science. Among these may be mentioned a species of *Peripatus*, that strange survival of a vast vanished group of organisms lying between the *Arachnida* and the *Insecta*.

My "bug" collecting brought me into contact with the late Roland Trimen, then Curator of the South African Museum, and Colonel Bowker, probably the most successful collector of butterflies that South Africa has ever seen. But it caused me to a certain extent to fall from grace in the eyes of Professor MacOwan, who had the true botanist's contempt for zoology in all its branches. He always referred to the Museum, which was then housed in the same building as the South African Library, as "that Wilderness of Monkeys."

The butterflies of South Africa, more especially those whose habitat is the forest, are of enormous interest; the life-histories of some of them read like fairy tales. Among the more interesting are those which depend largely upon pro-

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fective mimicry as a means of escaping their many enemies. Certain genera, such as *Danaïs* and *Acræa*, have an unpleasant taste, and are therefore avoided by the lepidoptera-eating birds. Various species belonging to other genera mimic the inedible varieties in both form and colouring, while maintaining their own proper anatomy. I think it was the late Mr. Maunsel Weale, an accomplished naturalist, who first demonstrated this fact.

The case of *Papilio cenea* is typical. The male form of this insect—a large butterfly usually found in forests—is light yellow in colour, the wings being deeply bordered with black. But the female assumes three distinct forms, each absolutely different from the other two, and each accurately resembling, in form and colour, some species of *Danaïs* or *Amauris*, which is inedible. And the extraordinary thing is, that if you hatch out a number of eggs laid by one female, you will find all varieties represented in the brood. Yet the anatomy of the wing, which is constant in all the varieties (the discoidal cell and its neurulation) will strictly conform to the *Papilio* type, and not to that of whatever variety is imitated.

Another interesting and almost virgin field for

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investigation lies in connection with the summer and winter forms of certain varieties. These forms, utterly unlike, give birth to each other.

My efforts were principally directed towards securing good specimens of the large forest *Nymphalidæ*, which are extremely wary and nearly as strong on the wing as birds. They usually hover high up among the tree-tops, and are consequently most difficult to capture. My best successes were generally made when I stood on the verge of a certain cliff which had forest both above and beneath it. Occasionally the butterflies would dart up or down within reach of my net. One little discovery which I made quite by accident enabled me to capture a practically unlimited number of a certain species which, although not exactly rare, seldom descended from the vicinity of the tree-tops, and was consequently much in demand. One day I slashed a strip of bark from the stem of a certain shrub; I required it to use as twine in tying up a bundle of plants. Some days afterwards I revisited the spot, and found the stem, which was about two inches in diameter, literally covered by a dense mass of butterflies of the species in question. There must have been from four to five hundred individual insects, all

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struggling to get at the sap which exuded from the cut. I do not intend to reveal the name of the shrub ; at my present time of life I prefer to think of the butterflies dancing in the sunlight among the tree-tops, rather than reposing, desiccated, in the camphorated gloom of some collector's cabinet.

CHAPTER VIII

Piyo—His story—He surrenders to me—'Mponi and the sheep
—I unwittingly occasion a murder—Insomnia—Mixture
of races—The Rev. James Read—His idiosyncrasies—
Captain George Green—"Impunge" my veracity—
"Something with an 'al'"—Umditshwa's surrender—I
act as relieving officer—Colesberg—Arthur Tweed once
more—Good shooting—Namaqualand—Its climate and
flora—Industrious collecting.

ONE sultry afternoon I was lying, half-asleep, in a deep kloof of the Eland's Berg. I had spent many hours climbing over the most rugged parts of the mountain and was fortifying myself by means of a nap for the long walk home. I heard a rustle and looked up. Before me stood a native with a big knobbed stick in his hand. I recognized him as one Piyo, a man whom I had not seen for a very long period, although I had heard of him from time to time. Piyo had once been well-to-do, but was now a homeless pauper. It was I that had been the instrument in bringing about this change in his circumstances. Now, however, he quite unconcernedly bade me good-

Further Reminiscences of a

day, and I returned his salute, wishing at the same time that I possessed some weapon for defence. The native was a much stronger man than I. But I had better tell the story from the commencement.

Piyo had dwelt within a few miles of Seymour and was the owner of some thirty head of cattle. He held the site of a kraal and some arable ground on communal tenure; he was, for the class to which he belonged, a well-to-do man. The season for sowing maize approached, and Piyo required seed. Then he did an extraordinary thing—he stole a thoroughbred cow worth about £30, from a farmer, drove the animal over the mountains into the Chumie Valley, slaughtered it, exchanged some of the meat for about ten shillings' worth of grain, and feasted his friends with the balance. Soon afterwards, finding that his crime had been discovered, he fled from the neighbourhood.

Some weeks later I happened to be acting as Resident Magistrate, my Chief being absent. As I was sitting in my office one afternoon I heard sounds of a violent struggle in the court-room, into which my room opened. Then my door burst open, and Piyo, with several policemen hanging on to him, flung himself to the floor in

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front of my table. I ordered the policemen to leave the man alone. Then he stood up and asked whether he might speak to me privately. When we were alone he told me that he had found life as a fugitive unbearable and had determined to give himself up to justice and stand his punishment, but that he wanted to surrender to me, personally, and not to the police.

We had quite a long talk ; I told Piyo that I should have to punish him very severely, as he had done a very evil deed. He replied to the effect that he fully understood this. He made no appeal for mercy.

And I was merciless in the punishment I inflicted ; young magistrates often are. I bitterly regret the severity of some of the sentences I passed long ago. I sentenced Piyo to receive five-and-twenty lashes, and to pay a heavy fine, out of which the owner of the stolen cow had to be compensated for his loss. The result was that all of Piyo's thirty head of cattle were "eaten up." Cattle were low in price, and the herd had been seized immediately after the theft was discovered, so the costs of the process were exceptionally heavy. Piyo went forth from his kraal a landless, ruined man. All this happened before I went to Cape Town. I heard, after my return,

Further Reminiscences of a

that Piyo was working as a labourer in the Cathcart district.

It may thus be imagined that I had some grounds for feeling uneasy. Here was I, in a dense forest, deep in a lonely mountain gorge ; most probably there was not another human being within miles of me. And there, with a big knobbed stick in his hand, was the man whom I had sentenced to a punishment involving intense physical torture as well as the total loss of that which is above all else valuable in the estimation of a native—his cattle.

We chatted unconcernedly about things in general. Piyo told me that he found difficulty in obtaining employment ; that people objected to having a convicted thief on their farms. He evidently found it hard to make a livelihood. After a pause he said—

“That was a very severe punishment you gave me.”

“Yes,” I replied, “but you deserved it. It was a wicked thing to waste a valuable cow in the way you did. Besides, you were not a poor man ; you could easily have paid for the seed grain you required.”

“Oh, I know all that !” he rejoined.

That was all. He stood up and civilly bade

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me farewell. I gave him a pipeful of tobacco and he departed. I have often felt that in spite of his crime Piyo was, in essentials, probably a better man than either the magistrate who so severely punished him or the farmer whose cow he stole.

I have often been struck by the strange way in which the threads of one man's fate occasionally become tangled with those of another. Once a trivial act of mine sealed the doom of a fellow-creature. The latter I never saw, but he was the son of a man I had known very well some years previously.

One morning a native named 'Mponi, with whom I was acquainted, and whom I knew to be a tenant of a farmer named Atmore, and the owner of stock, came to my office leading a sheep by a reim tied to its neck. He asked me to buy the sheep, as he required money, wherewith to pay hut-tax. This was quite an ordinary thing for natives to do. I bought the animal, which was a hamel suitable for household purposes, paying the ordinary market price. At once I sent it over to my house for the purpose of being slaughtered. Later in the day Atmore came to see me. I told him that I had bought a hamel from 'Mponi.

Further Reminiscences of a

"But," said Atmore, "'Mponi has no hamels ; he only has breeding sheep."

We went to my house and inspected the skin ; it was unbranded, but the head showed Atmore's ear-mark. 'Mponi was arrested. He pleaded guilty to the theft and was sentenced to a term of imprisonment. A few days afterwards he made his escape from the hard-labour party and fled over the Eland's Berg into the Cathcart district. Near the Windvogel Berg he came upon a wagon outspanned at night, with the owner, one Wainwright, asleep under it. Wainwright's servants had gone to sleep at a farm not far away. 'Mponi saw an axe standing against the wheel ; for some unknown reason he murdered the unhappy Wainwright with it. The murderer was subsequently captured, and, after making a full confession, was hanged.

Insomnia, from which I had suffered for several years, became in 1883 a terrible burthen. To this distressing malady I inherited a tendency ; this was accentuated by inordinate reading. For a long time my lamp was never quenched between nightfall and dawn ; I would read through the greater part of the night, with more or less short intervals of sleep. Then came a period during which I had great difficulty in sleeping

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at all. The least noise, the barking of a dog two hundred yards away, was sometimes enough to destroy all possibility of slumber for the whole night. Occasionally I ran down in the matter of nerves so much that I was obliged to go on leave. Then I would take a patrol tent, a kettle, a blanket, and some food to the summit of one or other of the highest mountains within reach. There I would spend a week or ten days, absolutely alone. An experience of this kind never failed to do me good.

It would require far more time and space than I have at my disposal to catalogue the many quaint and curious characters who lived and moved and had their being among the secluded Stockenstrom valleys. The population was as mixed as it is possible for a population to be. There were pure whites and pure blacks, with all intermediate shades. There were descendants of Madagascar slaves and of Malays who had been exiled from Southern Asia for political reasons in the days of the old Dutch Company. There were families whose names indicated German, Scandinavian, French, Spanish, and Italian blood. Many of these had intermarried, and the result was kaleidoscopic, if such a term be permitted.

The man who had probably the strongest indi-

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viduality in the district was the Reverend James Read, of Philipton. He was the son of a colleague of the celebrated (or, to some, notorious) Dr. Vanderkemp, who was such a noted negro-philist in the early days of the nineteenth century. These missionaries had both married women of Hottentot race, and the Mr. Read I knew was the result of one of the unions. He was a man of commanding presence and fluent speech. He was deeply read and highly cultivated. His wife was one of the most charming women I have ever met. In those days Mr. Read was a power in the land, for he practically controlled the Kat River vote, and could thus sway the election for the Fort Beaufort parliamentary division whichever way he liked. He often came to lunch at my house. A strange peculiarity of his was his absentmindedness. When he became interested in any topic under discussion, he used to do, quite unwittingly, the most peculiar things. For instance, at table he usually made a clean sweep of all the serviettes; occasionally he would impound other things as well. Mrs. Read invariably searched his pockets when he returned home. Sometimes she would have difficulty in finding out who all the miscellaneous articles she found belonged to.

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Captain George Green was another amusing character. He gained his title through being the commanding officer of the Kat River Volunteer Corps. Among other things he was an enrolled agent of the Magistrate's Court. I remember one occasion when, in pleading a case before me, he endeavoured to show that all the witnesses on his side were telling the truth and all those on the other side were lying. He delivered himself as follows:—

“Your Worship, my learned friend has tried to ‘impunge’ the veracity of my client and the worthy men who have told the truth on his behalf, but if you would only take the wings of the morning and fly over that part of the district where the defendant and his witnesses live, you would see their perjury arising as thick as the smoke from their chimneys.”

Captain Green's Volunteer Contingent was composed of coloured men under European officers. During the Tembu War the mother of one of the men asked a friend of mine who was going to the front to take a letter to a son of hers, one Piet Arends. As there were more than a dozen in the Contingent bearing the same name, my friend asked the

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woman for particulars regarding her son's rank. She replied as follows:—

“I do not know exactly what Piet is, but it is something with an ‘al’ (‘iets met een “al”’); he is either a *general*, a *corporal*, or a *colonel*.”

Umditshwa, one of the principal Tembu chiefs who rebelled, surrendered near the close of the war. The following account of the event was given by one of the Contingent on his return, and was currently believed. Umditshwa was described as sitting on a hill-top, surrounded by his councillors, gazing at the advancing Colonial forces.

“But who are those coming on so bravely?” asked the chief, pointing to our Contingent.

“These are the Kat River Hottentots,” some one replied.

“Then I’ll surrender at once; it is useless to fight against such warriors.”

After spending about a year at Seymour I was detailed as relieving officer. There was no formal appointment as such, but I was sent about from place to place to act as Civil Commissioner and Resident Magistrate where temporary vacancies occurred. My first appointment as relieving officer was at

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Colesberg, where my former Chief, Arthur Tweed, had come to terrible grief. There was some £600 missing from his official chest; but there were things against him much worse than this. The most charitable assumption was that his brain was affected. There was a band at Colesberg, the performers of which were coloured. This band used to parade the streets, with the Resident Magistrate dancing and capering before it. To prevent an unspeakable scandal, the Attorney-General consented, on my recommendation, to stay proceedings and permit the unhappy man to escape; so he was allowed to steal away. A few years afterwards he died in an inebriates' home in Australia.

At Colesberg I enjoyed magnificent shooting. Many of the farmers preserved their game, but Dr. Riordan, the District Surgeon, and I were welcome guests wherever we chose to visit. Buck of various kinds, bustards, korhaan, partridges, wild geese and ducks, all fell to our guns.

From Colesberg I was ordered to Namaqualand, that barren north-western district in which the copper-mines are situated. I took ship at Cape Town in an unspeakable craft

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called the *Namaqua*. This vessel wallowed like a washtub—which she somewhat resembled in shape—for six days before we cast anchor at Port Nolloth. The settlement consisted of a single row of tin shanties on a sand-hill. Another sand-hill, tired of the monotony of its situation, had begun to travel southward, and was slowly obliterating one end of the town. Port Nolloth, which is surely one of the most God-forgotten spots on earth, has nevertheless a grand climate. In summer the weather is so cool that one has often to don an overcoat. This is due to the almost constant presence of sea-fog, which streams along the coast. The fog reaches to an abrupt range of hills some five miles inland, but no farther. Beyond the summit of this range the weather is torrid. Within the distance of a hundred yards one could pass from summer to winter, or vice versa. One day I hurried, gasping from the heat, into the fog zone. The change was so delightful that I left my shirt unbuttoned at the throat and neglected to put on a jacket. As a result I contracted a very severe attack of bronchitis—the only one I have ever had.

From Port Nolloth I went by rail to the

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O'okiep mines. Five miles beyond was the seat of magistracy, a little village called Springbokfontein, clustered at the mouth of a disused copper-pit.

Namaqualand is essentially a region of drought, but this is occasionally mitigated in spring by a copious rainfall along that range of granite mountains which runs parallel to the coast, and which forms the backbone, as it were, of the district. Between this range and the sea lies a strip of desert from forty to sixty miles in width, and from the eastern fringe of the latter stretches the infinite desolation of Bushmanland. A certain amount of rain falls in the mountain tract nearly every season, but as a rule this takes the form of light showers, the moisture from which hardly penetrates more than a few inches beneath the surface of the sand.

The flora of the mountain region is marvellous in its occasional richness—in those seasons when in early spring the south-west wind, with treasure of moisture in its capricious wings, toys lingeringly with the bald granite peaks and covers every valley with a clinging, snow-white fleece of pregnant cloud. It is then that the red, torrid, sand-choked valleys

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wake to verdure and thrill to unimagined beauty.

I was fortunate in that the season of my visit was an exceptionally favourable one. As soon as I was able to struggle free from a horror in which I became involved almost immediately after arriving, and which I will presently describe, I devoted all my unofficial energies to the collection of plants, insects, and reptiles. There was little work to be attended to at the office, so I was, as a rule, able to spend several hours of each day in the veld. I had as companions two Hottentots, one of whom carried an immense portfolio with many double sheets of brown paper, and the other a large wide-mouthed jar containing poisoned spirit. I seldom got to bed before midnight, for I made it a point to classify each day's collections roughly before the next batch of specimens came in. As the mass of material accumulated, the work became very heavy indeed, for the driers between the different layers of plants had to be changed constantly, and after the drying process had been completed each individual specimen had to be treated with corrosive sublimate.

Snakes, lizards, toads, beetles, and butterflies—

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all were fish to my net. When I left, my collections filled seven large packing-cases. The bulk of the botanical collection was distributed subsequently by Professor MacOwan to the larger herbaria. The zoological collections went to the South African Museum, the institution paying only for the spirits and the bottles used in preserving the specimens. Several of the latter were new to science. Among the more interesting of these may be mentioned a toad which was marked like a leopard, and an "Apus"—the latter a small, one-eyed crustacean, the ova of which, blown about by winds over the desert's face, apparently retain their germ of life for quite indefinite periods.

The floral richness of the Namaqualand tract is a strange phenomenon, not so much as regards the number of individuals—for it is not difficult to imagine how certain species might, by means of a long apprenticeship, develop a hardihood sufficient to enable them to spread, rejoicing in their acquired strength, over vast tracts unfavourable to less-disciplined organisms. But how can one account for the enormous multiplication of species under conditions manifestly unfavourable to such multiplication? Surely it must be that this varied

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host of unrelated genera, this bewildering variety of species ranging from the giant aloe to the tiny *Holothryx* orchid, from the carnivorous *Roridula* and the foetid *Stapelia* to the tiny, fairylike *Heliophila*, were evolved under conditions radically different to those of to-day.

For these granite-flanked valleys which in the gracious winter days that follow a bountiful spring are full of loveliness almost beyond the belief of those who have not seen it, are in summer terrible with the abomination of flaming desolation. How, one asks in perplexity, can the life-germs from which spring these tender blossoms, so delicate in texture, survive for long, torrid seasons in the oven of the burning sand—sand so hot that one may, if so minded, cook an egg by burying it a few inches beneath the surface? It is a miracle, but it happens.

I firmly believe that were a human being—a European—to be left naked in parts of Namaqualand on a hot day, he would be roasted to death as effectually as if he were a heretic and in the power of Torquemada. And yet those flaming, quivering, barren tracts are ready, at the bidding of the first soaking

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rain-cloud, to spring to life in tender verdure
and wealth of dazzling, glowing petals. It is
like the everlasting springing of hope in man's
tortured but indomitable spirit, or the peren-
nial blossoming of his ineffectual aspirations upon
the dung-heap of the past,

I will here venture to include a sonnet
written during my sojourn in that land of
strange contrasts and anomalies:—

NAMAQUALAND

A land of deathful sleep, where fitful dreams
Of hurrying Spring scarce wake swift-fading flow'rs;
A land of fleckless sky and sheer-shed beams
Of sun and stars through day's and dark's slow hours,
A land where dust has choked once-fluent streams—
Where grassless plains lie girt by granite towers
That fright the swift and heaven-nurtured teams
Of winds that bear afar the sea-gleaned showers.

The wild Atlantic, fretted by the breath
Of fiery gales o'er leagues of desert sped,
Rolls back, and wreaks in surf its thund'rous wrath
On rocks that down the wan, wide shore are spread
The waves for ever roar a song of death—
The shore they roar to is for ever dead.

CHAPTER IX

The gaol horror—How to treat lunatics—A terrible discovery—Strange repentance—The value of human life according to Lopez—The investigation—Exhuming the mummies—A gruesome quest—An abnormal being—Faults of administration of justice—Chartered brutality of lawyers—Griquatown—Oudtshoorn—Richness of the district.

I now approach the grimmest and most appalling experience of my official career. I little expected, when I assumed duty at that remote village among the granite mountains, that within three days I would touch the skirts of terror and tragedy, and that for the following three months I would be preoccupied in the investigation of a series of horrors of their kind more piteous than anything else that the tragic annals of South Africa record.

I had met the Resident Magistrate of Namaqualand, whose functions I was about to assume, at Port Nolloth. In giving me various items of information about the place to which I was going, he mentioned the gaoler.

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Photo by]

SCENERY NEAR WESTERN MARGIN OF BUSHMANLAND DESERT.
(Note the resemblance to the late Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman.)

[Dr. R. N. Howard.

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"You will find him," said he, "a rough diamond. His manner is brusque, and he has offended a number of people. They will try to prejudice you against him, but he is a splendid officer."

"Oh, that's all right," I replied. "I like men of that stamp; they are usually satisfactory from an official point."

The Residency at Springbokfontein stands outside the village, in full view of, and about a hundred yards from, the gaol. Almost immediately after my arrival the gaoler, to whom I will refer as Berwick, came to report himself. He offered his services in getting the house straight. Berwick was a man of peculiar appearance; his face was not exactly repulsive, but it looked hard and suggested ill-temper. It was square, but somewhat narrow. The eyes, set very close together, were light china-blue; the lips were thin and the chin not badly formed. But in repose the mouth looked cruel under the light-coloured, sandy moustache. In figure Berwick was lightly built, but he was extremely sinewy, and, I should say, rather powerful. His height was about five feet six. I have given a detailed account of this man's appearance so as to

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enable the reader, so far as possible, to visualize him; for he was one of the strangest human beings with whom I have ever come in contact.

Berwick rendered most valuable assistance in putting the house straight. He unpacked the trunks, he made the beds, and he cooked the dinner. He even insisted on cleaning the boots. He advised me not to get a servant, saying that he would come up every day and attend to our needs. This, of course, I would not consent to. He worked with lightning speed, in silence, and with perfect neatness. It seemed as though household articles took life under his hands and moved to their proper places of their own accord. But strongly as I was prepossessed in his favour, and obliging as he proved to be, an involuntary feeling that something sinister underlay his usefulness continually asserted itself.

Next day I took over the office, and, by appointment, went to inspect the gaol in the afternoon. However, the hour was late, so I merely gave a cursory glance over the premises and put off my complete inspection until the following day. But it seemed apparent that everything was in perfect order. The

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place was so clean that one could, literally, have eaten one's dinner from the prison flags. There were only two or three prisoners on the premises; these looked sleek and well-fed. The bulk of the prisoners were out at work, gathering fuel from the hillsides.

When I told the gaoler that I would make a thorough inspection of the prison next day, and that I meant to interview all prisoners, turnkeys, and guards, he answered, speaking rather brusquely, that he did not consider this necessary. There were about thirty prisoners on the books.

Next day I made my inspection. The prisoners were assembled and asked in the usual way whether they had any complaints. They answered in the negative. I noticed that, with the exception of those I had seen the day before, they looked emaciated, and that several of them trembled as they stood in their places in the line. There were two main yards; these I went through, examining the cells that opened into each. There were also two small yards outside the main gaol, each with a single cell opening into it. I had seen a plan of the building, so knew exactly what I had to inspect. Berwick

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opened the first yard; it was empty. I moved towards the door of the second, but Berwick hung back. I told him to unlock the door, but he replied—speaking in rather a disrespectful tone—that the yard was empty. Nevertheless, said I, the yard had to be opened, as I always made it a point, when assuming duty at a new station, to know all about every corner of the gaol.

“I tell you,” said Berwick, very rudely indeed, “there is no one in that yard. It is not necessary to open it; besides, I have not got the key here.”

“Gaoler,” said I, speaking very sharply, “if you answer me again in that manner we will fall out. Get that key at once, or else stand the consequences of an act of direct disobedience.”

Grumbling and muttering, Berwick went slowly to his quarters. Then, after a somewhat long delay, he returned with the key. Still muttering, he opened the yard door.

The season was winter; the day was cold and damp. The south-west wind was blowing up scud, but there were occasional bursts of sunshine. Just then the sun was shining, but the walls of the yard were high, and it

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was only on one of the lintels of the cell door that the sunlight struck. Leaning against the doorpost, in an endeavour to get as much of the sun's heat as possible to his body, was a tall, elderly coloured man of mixed race. He wore only two garments—a short pair of breeches that hardly reached his knees and a very small jacket with sleeves cut off at the elbows. So skimpy was this garment that it did not meet over his naked chest. The man was attenuated almost to a skeleton, and was covered from head to foot with scars and ulcers. The tears were streaming down his haggard cheeks; his teeth were chattering, and he trembled from head to foot. As I gazed, spellbound, at this tragic figure, it collapsed in a huddled heap to the floor, and there lay, motionless.

“Gaoler, what is the meaning of this?” I inquired sharply.

“Oh, that man is a lunatic,” he replied.

“Lunatic or not,” I rejoined, “he has no business to be in that condition. Have a bed made up for him at once in the hospital cell.”

“Nonsense,” he rejoined. “I’ve been an attendant at Robben Island, and know how to treat lunatics.”

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I left the gaol at once and sent for the Chief Constable and two of his men. Then I had a comfortable bed made up in the hospital and directed that warm milk, soup, and stimulants should be administered to the patient in small quantities, and frequently. It was now late in the afternoon, and as the District Surgeon lived at O'okiep, I could not avail myself of his services. I gave the key of the yard to the constable, and ordered him to sleep in the cell and allow no one else to enter it without my permission. The unfortunate creature was not a lunatic at all, but a prisoner in course of being starved to death—the last of a long series of victims, as it turned out.

I went home shocked and puzzled, for night had fallen, and nothing more could be done before the morrow. One thing I determined on, namely, that I would hold a most searching investigation into prison matters.

While at supper I heard a knock at the front door. I opened it, and found Berwick, hat in hand, and in an attitude of extreme dejection. He besought me, in a voice choked with sobs, to overlook his impertinence and give him another chance. The overlooking of

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his impertinence was, I told him, a matter easy enough, but I could not overlook what I had seen in the outside yard; that would have to be investigated. But he begged me, with many tears, to overlook that too. Then he fell on his knees and lifted his clasped hands in appeal. This filled me with disgust, so I entered the house and closed the door, leaving him kneeling. Soon afterwards I heard the sound of his retreating footsteps.

Next morning, at an unusually early hour, the prisoners were sent out again to gather firewood. But I dispatched a messenger ordering the guard to bring them back. The District Surgeon came up from O'okiep; I instructed him to see to the sick man—who, by the way, had never been reported as such, and who was at death's door. The unfortunate creature had to be fed on beef-tea, French brandy, and other delicacies for four months before he could leave his bed.

Early in the afternoon the gang of prisoners returned. I at once went down to the gaol, accompanied by the Chief Constable and some of his men. The gaoler was most insolent. I ordered him to open the gaol; this he did with manifest unwillingness. I then told him

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to retire while I interviewed the prisoners. This he refused to do. His face became distorted with fury, and he advanced towards me in such a threatening manner' that I involuntarily lifted my arm so as to be ready to ward a blow. I told him that if he did not retire instantly I would have him removed by force, so he rushed out, muttering incoherently.

I then entered the yard and turned my attention to the prisoners. They were all men of colour; their emaciation and dejected mien was very noticeable. I felt that something was very wrong indeed, but had as yet no inkling as to the terrible truth. I lined the men up and addressed them, saying they need now have no fear of the gaoler, and might speak freely if they had any complaints to make.

I shall never forget the scene that ensued. Some of the prisoners flung up their hands and began to laugh wildly; others sank to the ground and wept. A heap of them flung themselves about my knees, clasping my legs and shrieking. It was as though five-and-twenty men had suddenly become raving lunatics. Finding it quite impossible to elicit any information from them in the yard, I

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went outside and directed that the prisoners should be brought to me, one by one.

Such a tale of terror and cruelty as I then heard I had never previously listened to, and I sincerely hope I may never have to listen to again. The poor creatures stripped their emaciated bodies and showed them covered with scars and bruises—some old, some half-healed, some quite recent. These, they said, had all been inflicted by the gaoler, or by one or other of their three sleek fellow-prisoners, who had apparently been licensed as assistant torturers. Berwick was walking up and down, his face working with fury. Each prisoner, when he caught sight of his persecutor, was struck dumb and shuddered pitifully. After interviewing about a dozen of them, I decided to take time before proceeding with the inquiry. I called Berwick up and told him to consider himself under suspension. Then I put one of the constables in charge of the gaol. Berwick raved and almost foamed at the mouth; I told him that if his manners did not mend I would have him arrested. Then I ordered the Chief Constable to lock the office. Berwick at once sprang forward, trying to enter the apartment,

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but the constables prevented him. He declared that the office contained some of his private property, which he wanted to remove. The office was a very small one. I entered it and looked over the shelves. A small bottle with a red label caught my eye. I examined this, and found it to be an ounce bottle of strychnine. I secured this and handed it to the Chief Constable.

That night I again heard a knock at my front door. I opened it: for the second time I saw Berwick before me in an attitude of humility. He began to sob convulsively.

"Oh, sir," he said, "do not go any farther with this business; let me go away quietly."

With that he fell down and laid his face on my feet.

"Get up, you coward," I said. "I am going to sift this business to the very bottom."

He wept wildly, and continued entreating me not to go on with the inquiry.

"If you do," he said, "there are others besides myself who will get into trouble."

I again shut the door in his face, and he went away. It struck me as being very curious that this man, so violently insolent by day, should become so abject in the darkness.

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Next morning I went through the gaol books and found, to my dismay, that within eight months fourteen deaths had been recorded. In not a single instance had an inquest or an inquiry been held. The District Surgeon had been absent on leave, and his duties were supposed to have been undertaken by a certain Dr. Fox, medical officer to the Cape Copper Company. Inquiry? Why, as a rule the bodies had never even been inspected by the medical officer. In gaols of this class throughout the Cape Colony, the deaths averaged one per annum for every two gaols. Yet here, in this one insignificant gaol, fourteen had occurred in eight months, and not a question asked. Under the present prison system such a state of things would be quite impossible. But in the eighties the central authorities had no means of knowing the condition of any gaol. Prison management lay solely in the hands of the Resident Magistrate.

I subsequently asked Dr. Fox how he had come to permit the interment of bodies of men who had not even been reported as ill without an investigation being held.

"My dear Mr. Scully," he replied, "when I was with Lopez, in Paraguay, I often, as

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I sat drinking my coffee at sunrise, saw five-and-twenty men marched out together to be shot. I don't value human life at *that*."

That was indicated by a snap of the fingers.

The investigation which followed was a dreadful business. The evidence showed beyond any possible doubt that a long system of the most ruthless persecution had been practised. Men had been starved to death; some had died in torment, jerking out their limbs. This suggested the bottle of strychnine found in the gaoler's office. I should, however, state that no traces of strychnine were found in or near any of the bodies exhumed. But, the strychnine apart, the evidence of appalling brutality was clearly established. I was told of men having had their bones broken from blows given with heavy clubs and sweeping-brushes. We found evidence of this in the subsequently exhumed bodies. Old men used to be dipped in tubs of water and put, in their wet clothes, into bare cells for the whole night. The few sleek prisoners were the deputy torturers; they were fed on the rations withheld from their victims. There was reason to believe that the deaths had not been restricted to fourteen, but that number

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included all that could be traced in the prison books. The gaoler was arrested and charged with wilful murder.

It became necessary to exhume the bodies. This was a gruesome business. Berwick used three separate graveyards; on three separate hillocks of red sand the martyred prisoners had been respectively buried. As no system had been followed in selecting the place of burial in any particular instance—as all three cemeteries had been kept going at once—it was impossible to identify any individual grave. Accordingly, the exhumation had to be affected in quite a haphazard manner.

The dead prisoners had been buried without coffins; thus, contact with the intensely arid sand had caused immediate desiccation and prevented decay. Consequently the bodies resembled Egyptian mummies of one of the earlier dynasties more than anything else. Identification was, in the majority of instances, quite out of the question. It was only in cases where the bones of the victims had been actually smashed that we were able even approximately to establish identity. It was this that made the legal proceedings against Berwick so difficult—this, and the fact that

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Dr. Fox strained every nerve to secure a breakdown on the part of the prosecution. Not alone was he anxious to save his own skin, but he was filled with the bitterest personal animosity towards myself for the part I had taken in showing up his gross carelessness.

There was a small disused house below the Residency; this we turned into a mortuary, and in it, leaning stiff and stark against the walls, might have been seen those mute and piteous witnesses of a foul system of unspeakable brutality. The bodies—mere skeletons with skin drawn tightly over them—presented an indescribably hideous appearance, but were not in the slightest degree offensive. We found what we were seeking—broken bones corresponding with description of injuries as given by the witnesses. One poor creature had had the upper portion of the sternum, to which the clavicles were attached, driven into his chest from a blow with the mallet-like end of a heavy sweeping-brush. Another had had his ribs stove in by the same instrument—and so on.

Berwick was tried before the Supreme Court, and was defended by the most gifted member of the Cape Town Bar. To secure a conviction in a trial for murder the evidence has

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to be very clear and consistent. In this case—or rather in the three cases, for I selected that number and dropped the others, the evidence was clear but not quite consistent. The fractured bones were produced in court, but the details related by the witnesses were so awful that it was clear the jury believed there was exaggeration. Dr. Fox, one of the principal witnesses for the prosecution, did his best to shield the prisoner. Unfortunately the Court did not know of his experiences with Lopez, and the effect these had had on his character. Moreover, the witnesses mixed up things. One would detail how Klaas had been mutilated; the next would depose that it was Gezwindt who had been so treated, and so forth. If you take a number of savages out of their accustomed environment, pen them, crowded, between stone walls and subject them to a long course of physical torture and mental tension, their memories are bound to become unreliable. It was impossible, under the circumstances, to convict for murder, so the jury, following the judge's charge, found Berwick guilty of common assault only. For this he was sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment, with hard labour.

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My own impression has always been that Berwick was one of those abnormal beings whose only enjoyment lies in the contemplation of human suffering. I am not prepared to say that he was quite sane; his extraordinary conduct in cringing abjectly in the dark and conducting himself with the most violent insolence in daylight suggests that he may have been a dweller of that undefined border-land between the sane and the insane, in which moral responsibility may or may not be held as binding. He had been a drug-dispenser in the Royal Navy, and—taking his own statement to be true—an attendant at the Robben Island Lunatic Asylum. I have often wondered as to what became of him after his discharge from prison.

The Berwick case caused me to reflect seriously on the perfunctoriness of our system of administration of criminal justice. During late years things have somewhat improved in this respect, although there is still much to be desired. It has often seemed to me preposterous that a criminal, with friends sufficiently rich to secure for him the services of a first-rank pleader, should escape richly deserved punishment through the prosecutor being overmatched and outmanœuvred.

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Recently I was concerned in a case which made it clear that something is radically wrong with our judicial system. The case in question was a very unsavoury one: an elderly man was charged with assaulting two little girls. Two ladies had witnessed the occurrence. Unwillingly, and acting solely from a sense of duty, they gave information to the police. The case was tried before the Circuit Court and the defence was based on the ridiculous assumption that the witnesses were actuated by malice against the accused, and had, in conspiracy with the children, trumped up a false charge against him.

There was not the very slightest ground for this, but the ladies and the little children had to submit to a long and degrading cross-examination, full of the vilest suggestions—suggestions as preposterous as they were baseless. Why, one wonders, has society not invented some check upon this sort of procedure? Many women would rather die than submit to the chartered brutality of a court of law. Such a court, instead of being a solemn bear-garden, in which a lawyer can, for the purpose of perverting the course of justice, indulge in grotesque truculence, ought to be a forum before which any attempt at “making the worse appear the better reason” would be

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counted as disgraceful. Personally, there is nothing I so keenly enjoy as being tackled when in the witness-box by a browbeating advocate. When one pays such an individual back in his own coin—a thing he is quite unaccustomed to—he almost invariably collapses pitifully and craves the protection of the Court.

My term of office at Namaqualand having come to an end, I was sent to Griquatown, in the district of Hay, to relieve the Resident Magistrate, who wanted to go on leave. But in the meantime he had changed his mind, so I was instructed to proceed to Oudtshoorn for the purpose of relieving the incumbent there, who was in bad health. Oudtshoorn had then just entered upon that career of prosperity which has since made it second only to Johannesburg as a wealth-producing centre in South Africa. While I was there arable land fetched in the open market as much as £700 per morgen or £350 per acre. This price was, of course, excessive at the time, but it would not be so by any means at the present day. Arable land is, I am told, more expensive at Oudtshoorn than anywhere else in the world.

The district lies in a wide, level valley between two mountain ranges, the Zwartberg and the

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Outeniqua, and through the middle of this the Olifant River flows. The river, fed by a number of affluents from the high ranges on either side, rises in mighty flood every few years and covers the bottom of the valley. When the flood subsides, a deposit of fresh alluvium, several inches thick, is left behind. This deposit is of a most marvellous richness; it completely renews the fertility of the soil. The Oudtshoorn Valley is, in fact, an Egypt in miniature.

The richness of the soil is almost unparalleled. Little else than lucerne is grown, for the ostrich thrives on this product, and the profits of ostrich-farming are so enormous that no landowner dreams of following any other pursuit. But when the inevitable overproduction of feathers, consequent on successful farming with ostriches in other parts of the world, comes, the full capabilities of the Oudtshoorn soil will first be made manifest. On one piece of land in the Olifant's Valley, tobacco, the most exhausting of all crops, had been grown continuously for upwards of a century in 1887, with no perceptible diminution in point of fertility of the soil.

Oudtshoorn is, I believe, the only place in the Cape Colony where there are two synagogues. When I was there it was the headquarters

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of the itinerant trade in ostrich feathers, and this trade was almost solely in the hands of the Jews. It was a most fertile source of litigation. Competition was so keen that the traders used to buy the pluckings in advance ; sometimes months before the feathers were ready to be plucked. If the crop turned out a failure the trader would endeavour to repudiate the bargain ; if, on the other hand, it turned out to be exceptionally good, the farmer would cry off the deal ; so it came to a lawsuit, anyway. Consequently I used to sit in court almost every day and all day long, trying such cases. I think there were then twenty-six lawyers practising in the Magistrate's Court, and most of them appeared to be doing fairly well.

CHAPTER X

Seymour again—An unaccountable occurrence—My strange dream—Fokwana's coffin—Fort Beaufort—Good shooting—Promoted to Namaqualand—The Bushmanland Desert—Its fascination—Its pains and pleasures—Its strange inhabitants—The Cape Copper Company—"The Super"—Grinding tyranny—Collapse of our musical entertainments—Regal state of Super and his family—O'okiep scandals—Virulent influenza—Result of kindness to a gaoler—The Chief Constable—His Anglo-Saxon attitudes.

FROM Oudtshoorn, there being no temporary vacancy, I returned to Seymour. I will now relate two trivial occurrences which, in spite of their triviality, are interesting because impossible to account for, according to any known natural laws.

At Seymour I occupied a room at the back of a certain shop. The building was constructed on a slope. Consequently, while the front door of the shop was level with the street, the room I occupied, on the same floor, stood high over the back premises and was approached from the back yard by a small stairway. On the other side of

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the yard, still lower down, was a room occupied by a man named Blackburn.

I had for some time been suffering from insomnia of a severe type, and was much disturbed at night by the barking of dogs and by other noises. Consequently I used to lie in bed o' mornings as late as possible, and Blackburn got into the habit of calling me at exactly twenty minutes to nine every day. This just gave me enough time to get up, tub and breakfast before putting in an appearance at the office.

One night, having lain awake for an unusually long time, I suddenly felt a desire for a stimulant. As a rule I kept no liquor in my room, but some months previously I had got a bottle of gin for the purpose of physicking my pony. I remembered that the bottle, which still contained a small quantity of the spirit, was standing on a shelf in the small room just across the landing of the stairway, in which I kept my saddlery. So I fetched the bottle to my room, poured the gin into a glass, and added water from my ewer. But through carelessness I poured in more water than I intended, and thus filled the glass. I drank off the contents, but owing to the excessive dilution, and the fact that the spirit had been kept for a long time in a bottle with a shrunken cork,

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I could taste nothing but water in the draught. I made the mental reflection that I might as well have been drinking pure water.

In the morning Blackburn paid his usual visit.

"I had a most vivid dream about you last night," he said. "I dreamt you were drinking gin and that you poured in so much water you could not taste it."

Now, unless Blackburn had stood on stilts ten feet high he could not have seen into my room. Moreover, had he watched the whole process, he could hardly have inferred that I was unable to taste the gin, for I said nothing.

The other case was even more extraordinary. I had returned from a short holiday. My Chief, Mr. Arthur Garcia, was only waiting for my advent to go on a trip. A few weeks previously—a day or two before I had started on my holidays—a Basuto schoolmaster, living at a village called Readsdales, had lost his life. This man, Makai Fokwana by name, had taken to evil courses. One night, when on his way home in a state of intoxication, Fokwana fell from his horse at the roadside. The season was winter; a bitter frost had set in. Next morning his dead body was found.

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Mr. Garcia went out and held the necessary inquest. I happened to be at his house that evening when he returned. He asked me, as my road led through the village, to call at the house of the contractor for gaol supplies and order a coffin for Fokwana, under the Government contract. This I did. Within three days I was away from Seymour. I never gave Fokwana or his coffin a second thought.

I returned from my trip and Mr. Garcia had arranged to leave on the following day. In handing over the office prior to his departure, he drew my attention to several trifles awaiting settlement. Among other things he pointed out an envelope containing a memorandum and some money. This had reference to the Fokwana obsequies. Although a coffin had been ordered from the contractor, such had to be paid for by the friends of the deceased. They had been contributing towards the price by weekly instalments: a balance of ten shillings was still due.

A few nights afterwards I had a strangely vivid dream. I thought I was standing on the raised stoep of the hotel at which I took my meals, when I noticed, on the ground before me, a strange-looking oblong box, made of scantling boards

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joined by rough cross-pieces which were nailed outside, and with the corners bevelled off in a peculiar manner. While I was looking, the lid of the box shifted to one side, and I noticed the figure, apparently of a human being, lying inside. The figure was covered with a sheet ; while I looked, it sat up and, without removing the sheet, spoke as follows :—

“I am not yet dead, but I soon shall be. But I am not satisfied. It is not right to bury a human being in a box such as this ; it is not a coffin at all.”

I then woke up. At the breakfast-table I related my dream ; the latter had been so extraordinarily vivid that it impressed me. Soon after I reached the office that morning, Andries Hatha, Native Field Cornet of Readsdales, came to see me.

“I have come about Fokwana’s coffin,” he said.

“Yes,” I replied, opening the drawer of the safe ; “there is still ten shillings due on it.”

I should here mention that, so far, I had not in any way connected my dream with Fokwana or his coffin. The latter I had never heard referred to, except when Mr. Garcia handed me over the office.

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"I have brought the money," continued Hatha, "but we are not satisfied." (Here my dream flashed into mind.) "It was not a coffin that was supplied, but just a box, and it was not a fit thing to bury a human being in."

I was now filled with amazement ; Hatha had used words almost similar to those uttered by the sheeted figure of my dream.

"Will you describe the box?" I asked.

"It was just a long box made of scantling boards," he answered, "and nailed together with rough cross-pieces outside."

"Was there anything peculiar about the corners?"

"The corners were cut off sideways (schyns)."

This almost stunned me. I received the ten shillings from Hatha and sent to ask the contractor how it was that a receptacle such as was described had been supplied instead of a proper coffin. The explanation was, that when the coffin was ordered no timber except scantling boards had been available in the village.

The day at length came when I had to choose between accepting a transfer to a larger office or else losing my turn for promotion. With many regrets I accepted the former alternative. Fort Beaufort was my new station. In early days

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this place had been an important military post ; it contained forts, barracks, and many other buildings, all vacant, but which had formerly been full of busy life. The district, which included within its bounds the southern and eastern faces of the Great Winterberg Range, was full of beautiful scenery. There was good shooting to be had ; bushbuck inhabited most of the forests and koodoo were to be found in the broken country where the Kat and Koonap Rivers ran together. Within an hour's walk of the town guinea-fowl roamed along the banks of the Kat River in thousands. So plentiful was game that on one occasion my pantry contained sixteen different kinds.

The town was then the chief exchange station of the Eastern Telegraph System, which employed a strong contingent of clerks. For a time I lived at the hotel, where a number of these young men boarded. Being insomniac I was much worried by noises at night. The telegraph clerks got to know of this, so every night regularly they used to assemble outside my window and sing in chorus—

“Poor old Jeff has gone to rest,” &c.

But on the whole they were a good-natured lot, and they tended to enliven the place.

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After a little more than a year I got my promotion to—of all places in the world—Namaqualand. The idea of taking a census a few years previously had fallen through, but now, at the end of 1890, preparations for the general enumeration in April, 1891, were in full swing. For two or three months I had been kept busy visiting various stations where Civil Commissioners had been unable to get out intelligible preliminary plans, and cutting districts into enumerators' areas. But while I was thus helping lame dogs over stiles, my own district had been neglected. Absolutely nothing had been done towards framing the census plan for Namaqualand, and as the Resident Magistrate of Port Nolloth proved quite incapable of dealing with his district, I had to take that in hand as well. Thus I had to begin the preliminary work in what was certainly the most difficult portion of Cape Colony to handle, four months after other Civil Commissioners had begun theirs.

A very large area of Namaqualand had not been surveyed, so I had to undertake several journeys through the Bushmanland Desert for the purpose of determining the limits within which various clans of nomads wandered, framing rough charts of the areas, and, where

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Photo by]

TYPICAL LANDSCAPE, BUSHMANLAND DESERT.

[Dr. R. N. Howard.



Photo by]

VIEW OF ORANGE RIVER, NORTHERN MARGIN OF BUSHMANLAND.

[Dr. R. N. Howard.

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possible, employing suitable men as enumerators and instructing them as to their duties. I travelled with a cart drawn by four mules, and was accompanied by an old Hottentot named Piet Noona. The season was summer, and we had a rough time. In crossing the Bushmanland Desert we had each day to dig for water—an operation which it sometimes took several hours to effect. When the wet sand lying just above the water was reached, the mules, mad with thirst, would usually try to fling themselves into the pit. After the water had been uncovered, it had to be scooped up with a pannikin and lifted out in a bucket. This consumed several hours more, so it was always past midnight before we could think of sleep.

Bushmanland was like an illimitable field of waving corn, the yellow shocks of "twa" grass covering it continuously for thousands of square miles. In winter these shocks turn black and crumble to dust. In those journeys I had my first experience of plains practically infinite in extent and as level as the sea. For some natures the charm of the desert—the fascination of these vast, sunlit solitudes—is strong and compelling. One feels there in contact with realities. The wearing, wearying conventions of human society,

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the fruits of that deadly creed which teaches that the main object of life is labour, and that leisure is a crime ; the sense of the blighting tyranny of an industrialism, the only intelligible object of which is the wealth and luxury of the few—that tyranny which is digging a pit in which civilization itself may be engulfed ; in the desert all troubles such as these seem to be lifted from one's fainting spirit, to recede, to crumble into dust on Time's great rubbish-heap—the Past.

Life in the desert tends to leave one face to face with one's own soul—not always a cheerful companion. But the desert is a severe task-mistress, and, by the imposition of heavy toil, draws one's mind from the rag-fair of unrealities in which we spend our days, twisting ropes of sand and weaving futile nets of cobweb wherewith to ensnare the feet of barren dreams. For with the flaming sun above and the red-hot sand beneath, you have no time for trifling. Your environment is one of danger ; the breaking of an axle might spell your death. Therefore your axle, or any other necessary gear that might possibly give way, becomes a matter of absorbing interest. You know of a place where, at a given time of the year, water may usually be obtained

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by digging. Yet it is possible that some nomads may have lately tented there and used up every drop. Should this prove to be the case, you would have to deal warily to avoid perishing. At night the cobra, whose bite is certain death, emerges from his deep, cool lair and glides over the surface; in the morning you will see his zigzag track close to your camp. But the sense of danger, the possible immanence of death, wakens the manhood within you from its convention-drugged sleep. Throughout the seemingly interminable hours of the day the sunlight pours on you like a fiery flood; you suffer acutely as the torrid air-waves, sped from the glinting silver-furnace-sea of the mirage, overwhelm you. But you do not lie down and gasp, as you would do in your ordinary sedentary environment when the heat is excessive. No; you want to resist, to fight with all your strength, and your latent potency wells up from deep, unsuspected sources until you almost rejoice in the torment that your new-found fortitude enables you to sustain.

And when night falls the Spirit of the Wilderness steals up to comfort you for the pains of the day, and the sweet influences of the Pleiades fall like unguents, healing the wounds made by

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the arrows of the tyrant sun. The agonies of to-morrow are divided from you by a seeming eternity of slow, sumptuous hours, at the close of which you will stand transfigured beside the Dawn Maiden who, with the sure and certain hope of resurrection in her shining eyes, will await the falling of the furnace bars, the opening of the portals of his palace by the tyrant King of Day, the ardours which will enrapture and consume her.

The secret of the desert's health-giving lies, I think, in this: that it tends to lead your soul forth from the dank, dark cavern in which stifling convention, the dire inheritance of dead centuries, has pent it. At the desert's liberating word you and your soul stand forth, face to face, real and vital, naked and beautiful as God and Nature have made you. You have probably never met before; your eyes have been sealed, your tongue tied, your ears bandaged. Now you meet like the first man and the first woman in the Eden myth, and you find each other fair. The past, with its betrayals, its sins, and its stains is sloughed off; it belonged to your conventional, not your real self; the future loses its terrors; you lave at the fountain of primal life, and are cleansed.

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My desert journeyings took me to strange places—to camps of nomad men whose mixed blood ran thinner for the mixing, whose physique had sunk under the burthen of the hard life they led until it seemed as though Hope had ceased to haunt even their dreams. These people would wither in any environment; they will probably survive longer in the desert than they would elsewhere. They took me to shrines where the Gospel of Galilee was laboriously forced into ears hopelessly deaf to its meaning; to institutions where strenuous, self-denying labour was wasted in striving for impossible ideals—poured forth like water on the burning surface of the waste. They took me to camps of men whose endurance was as that of the wild creatures whose strenuous desert lot they shared, and who, if their thoughts could wind themselves upon the thread of some tradition, or crystallize under the impact of an adequate ideal, might rise to heroic deeds.

It was with a somewhat sad heart that I used to leave the clean, strong, strenuous life of the wilderness, with its health-giving hardships, and return to mix with the turgid society that stagnated around the copper-mines. I do not know what O'okiep is like now, not having seen it for some seventeen years, but in 1893 it contained

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what I should say was about the most unpleasant community in South Africa to deal with. The Cape Copper Company practically owned the bodies, and consequently tyrannized over the souls of its inhabitants. The local head of the Company was, except in the matter of mining, quite uneducated. He was as pompous as a grocer-alderman and as touchy as a cuttle-fish. It was not alone that one had to give him precedence in everything—that I never objected to doing ; but he expected you to approach him with abject homage—to crawl on the ground before his hobnailed feet. If one could imagine a baron of the Middle Ages with tyrannical tendencies, a navvy, and a beadle all rolled into one, one might begin to realize “The Super,” as he was termed. But without experiencing it, you would never realize what it meant to be under the heavy, callous thumb of such a being.

“The Super ” was, as a matter of fact, as much an autocrat in his little sphere as is the Tsar in All the Russias. The Company, of which he was practically the irresponsible executive, owned the house I lived in, the court-room in which I sat as magistrate, the gaol in which the prisoners I sentenced were confined, and the well from which was drawn the only water available for

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my household. Immediately after my arrival I gave unpardonable offence by declining to occupy the house which had from immemorial times been used as a Residency, without paying a fair rental for it. I also declined to avail myself of the use of the cart and horses and other privileges which my predecessors had enjoyed. I felt that it was not fitting for one holding the position of head judicial and administrative officer to be the recipient of valuable favours from an all-powerful local body. My predecessors had been classed as Company's officers; they had been supplied with fuel, light, and postage stamps. All these I declined. But this manifestation of independence cost me dear, for the cold shades of disfavour fell on me and on my household, and extended to any one showing us the least friendliness.

But no matter how low Israel may have fallen, there is always a saving remnant. At O'okiep there were a few very charming people. Some of these were musical, so we arranged to have a weekly musical afternoon at the Residency. For a time these were very successful. Then an order was issued by the Super that on the particular afternoon of our gathering no carts or horses were to leave O'okiep. There was, of

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course, no chance of fighting against this. It should be mentioned that in terms of the Company's regulations no official was permitted to keep horses or vehicles, but a considerable stud and a large assortment of vehicles were kept at the Company's stables, and the officials were, on good behaviour, allowed the use of these.

The climate of Namaqualand is very trying to women and children; so much so that it is absolutely necessary to send them to Port Nolloth, which is always cool and misty, for some weeks during the summer. The Company kept a number of furnished houses for this purpose, and—also on good behaviour—these were apportioned each season. To get to the coast by rail one had to go, cap in hand, to the Super and ask him for a "Special," as the passenger coach was called. The line was the property of the Company. The only public carriage was practically impossible to travel in, being a narrow wooden box, without springs or cushions. Besides, it was usually crowded with natives. The whole Namaqualand system of local management was arranged on the basis of no one having any rights. With the exception of the air one breathed, no necessity of existence could be obtained except by special grace of the preposterous person who

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wielded the Copper Sceptre like a rod of iron. Even the farmers of the district were under the Company's thumb, for the Company was the only customer for produce. If a farmer offended—for instance, by manifesting anything like independence on the Divisional Council—he was liable to the boycott. This power was exercised ruthlessly and in sledge-hammer fashion.

It may thus be easily understood that my ways were not ways of pleasantness, nor were my paths peaceful. So far as I was personally concerned, I could usually escape the stroke of the rod, for I held the additional appointment of Special Magistrate for the Northern Border, with a roving commission. Thus I could retreat into the peace of the desert whenever I felt disposed to do so. But on these occasions my family, which had to remain behind, had to suffer from many slings and arrows of outrageous authority.

The family of the Superintendent kept up something like regal state. His wife was a dear old lady, without a trace of snobbery or nonsense in her homely nature. Unfortunately, however, other members of the family made up for her deficiencies in these respects. The daughters held receptions at which all, under pain of disfavour,

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were required to attend, but they considered themselves excused from the obligation of returning calls. Occasionally a dance was given. If at one of these any male guest failed in his duty in the matter of dancing with the Super's daughters, his shoulders felt the stroke of the heavy copper rod. If such a defaulter were a Company's official, he was next morning summoned to Papa's office and soundly rated for his neglect. Even the senior officials of the Company—quite elderly men—were not exempt from this discipline.

I have never been in touch with any community where there was such a constant undercurrent of scandalous innuendo as there was at O'okiep. In certain quarters what I will term moral unconventionality went naked and unashamed. Here and there among the arid hills surrounding the mines small fountains might be found, and at several of these were mat-houses inhabited by the dusky families of men holding more or less prominent positions in the community. This sort of thing was taken as a matter of course, and was not nearly so objectionable as other relationships which unsavoury suggestion indicated. If what was said about many of the inhabitants were only half true, O'okiep

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must have been, in the matter of morals (or their absence) as sultry as was its climate. Personally I prefer not to express an opinion on the subject. Possibly things may have changed for the better in this respect; they could hardly have altered for the worse.

Soon after my arrival at Springbokfontein a most virulent epidemic of influenza broke out. There were many deaths. At O'okiep at one time there were over seven hundred people ill at once. At Springbokfontein 90 per cent. of the population went down. My clerk and his wife, the doctor, the police, the gaoler and his staff, all went down. So did our servants. My eldest son, then an infant and the only child we had with us, lay for days at death's door. We got two nurses, one after the other; both of them took the malady. Fortunately my wife and I escaped. Had I fallen ill the consequences would have been most serious, for I had to inspan my horses every day and fetch water from the well, which was about a mile away, in a cart. This work was, under ordinary circumstances, performed by the convicts. But they were all laid up, and had I become helpless we might have died of thirst, for no assistance could have been obtained. All business was at a standstill; the

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place was like a city of the dead. The epidemic spread among the farmers and also among the natives.

I once sojourned at an oasis in the southern part of the coast desert where fourteen families of Trek Boers (European nomads) were camped. A visitation of diphtheria had just occurred, and among all the camps only three children were left alive.

In the early part of 1892 my gaoler was transferred and an ex-sergeant of the Royal Engineers was appointed to the post. Feeling sorry for this man's lonely lot—for there were none of his own class with whom he could associate—I invited him to come to my house of an evening and play chess. For a few months he came several times a week. But I noticed that he was neglecting his work and taking to strong drink. Eventually I had to report him for misconduct. Shortly afterwards the Inspector of Chests came to audit my office, and the gaoler lodged a complaint with him against me. He said it was true that he had been drinking too much, but that it was I who had induced him to do so ; that I had been in the habit of inviting him to my house, where we would get drunk together. As a matter of fact, all he had ever

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imbibed at my house was an occasional glass of light hock with soda-water from a syphon when the weather was hot. As to myself, intemperance has never been among my vices.

The man was dismissed. He began following me about with a loaded revolver. One day when I was working at my office after hours he came to the window with the revolver in his hand. I had him arrested and lodged in gaol. Soon afterwards he obtained employment under the Copper Company.

Another member of my staff, the Chief Constable, gave me trouble. This individual was well connected; it was through influential relatives at Cape Town that he had obtained his appointment. I do not think he was quite responsible for his actions. His favourite way of annoying me was to tiptoe into my room if no one was about, and throw himself into Anglo-Saxon attitudes before me, keeping a perfectly grave face while doing so. I suspended him, and the Company took up the cudgels on his behalf. He was entertained with almost royal honours; for some weeks he was quite a popular hero. But this did not save him from dismissal.

All this had, of course, its humorous side. Nevertheless it was wearing to the nerves. I

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regard the period of my sojourn in Namaqualand as the most trying time of my life. Had it not been for the periodical plunge into the cleansing fires of Bushmanland, I do not think I could have stood it.

CHAPTER XI

The last great "trek"—Slaughter of springbucks—Appointed to Peddie—Farewell to Bushmanland—Oryx hunting—A simian community—Natural history—Characteristics of Peddie—Snakes in the Residency—The Peddie people—The Agricultural Society—Episode of the debilitated hen-turkey—The Peddie Fingos—The native question—Splendid fishing—Flying fishes—The boat filled with fish—Mr. Rhodes's offer—His intolerance—Appointed to Mount Frere—My long journey—The native hut—Permanence of the African native.

It was my fortune in 1892 to witness the last great "trek," as the annual migration of springbucks from east to west across the desert is termed. The number of bucks involved in such a phenomenon varies according to circumstances. The amount of rain that may have fallen in the central plains is one of the determining factors in this respect. There can never again be a "trek" on a really large scale. Fencing, the increase of population, and the general distribution of arms of precision among people have almost exterminated that hapless, at one time innumerable, host for whose use, if there be any

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such thing as design in creation, the Great Bushmanland Desert must have been made.

The idea underlying the "trek" seems to have puzzled hunters and naturalists from time immemorial. To me the explanation is simple and obvious. In summer a certain amount of rain falls in Bushmanland, but in winter that tract is absolutely rainless. It is bounded on the west by a range of granite mountains which spring from sandy plains. Here no summer rains fall, but in early winter the south-west wind brings soaking showers, and the sandy plains lying among the mountains become clothed for a few weeks with rich, succulent vegetation. This occurs at the season when the springbuck fawns are born, and when, consequently, the does require green food. Hence the westward "trek," which is, I believe, of hoar-ancient origin.

A view of the "trek" when at its height was an experience not to be forgotten. It would be fruitless to attempt an adequate description of it. In dealing with myriads numbers cease to have any significance. One might as well endeavour to describe the mass of a mile-long sand-dune by expressing the sum of its grains in cyphers, as to attempt to give the numbers of antelopes forming the living wave that surged

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across the desert in 1892 and broke like foam against the western granite range. I have stood on an eminence some twenty feet high, far out on the plains, and seen the absolutely level surface, as wide as the eye could reach, covered with resting springbucks, whilst from over the eastern horizon the rising columns of dust told of fresh hosts advancing.

I had to issue a hundred rifles and many thousands of cartridges from the Government store to the farmers to enable them to protect their crops. The farmers used to bring back carcasses by the wagon-load to their wives, by whom the meat would be made into "bultong." Over and over again the wagon would go out from the same farmhouse, always, while the "trek" lasted, returning with a full load.

After the wave had receded, the western margin of Bushmanland was like a ploughed field; all the grass-roots, all the shrubs, were lying loose on the surface, beaten out by the hoofs. At many points the invading host broke through the line of defence, and overran the cultivated fields. One hapless springbuck was shot in the graveyard at O'okiep, of all places in the world. The "trek" ended more suddenly than it began. In a single night the springbucks totally disappeared.

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At the end of 1892 I was appointed Civil Commissioner and Resident Magistrate of Peddie, in the Eastern Province. It was almost imperative that I should leave Namaqualand, for my relations with the Cape Copper Company had become very strained indeed. I have reason to believe that the Company's dislike for me was as strong as my contempt for it, and as my pity for the unhappy people still under its sway, who had become so habituated to tyranny that chains had almost ceased to gall.

To Bushmanland, however, I was sorry to bid farewell. The journeys I made through the desert will always be remembered as among the most interesting and fruitful experiences of my life. That austere peace, that strenuous employment of body and mind which brought rest to the spirit, all that life in those remote and trackless spaces involved, proved a discipline of abiding value. The memory-shelf on which the record of my desert adventures is stored is one which could ill be spared from the cupboard of my brain. Moreover, the unusual forms of animal and vegetable life, and the strange types of humanity exhibited by the nomads of various breeds, were of endless interest.

The royal sport of oryx-hunting deserves a

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Photo by

SPOILS OF A HUNTING TRIP, BUSHMANLAND DESERT.

[Dr. K. N. Howard.]

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chapter to itself. It has, however, been fully described by me elsewhere. Of all forms of sport it is probably the most arduous ; possibly, too, the most satisfying. It usually involves a chase of at least ten miles at full gallop over sand as springy as indiarubber and in an atmosphere like fiery champagne, with a fierce and noble quarry standing at bay at its close. But those who engage in it must be sound of wind and limb, and should have nerves like piano-wire. After having slain specimens of most of Africa's big game, I can truly say that I found the chase of the oryx a transcendent experience.

For the naturalist, the Bushmanland Desert is full of interest. Owing to the great heat, a large proportion of the minor desert fauna dwells underground by day, and is consequently missed by the casual observer. This is more especially the case in respect of reptiles and large spiders. Scorpions, occasionally of immense size (I gave one to the Cape Town Museum which measured $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches), are to be found under almost every stone on the rugged ranges with which Bushmanland is bounded on its northern and western sides. Large yellow tarantulas are to be found in countless myriads in the deep river-gorge. On more than one occasion I have been driven from

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my camp-fire by them. Once they came literally in thousands, circling round the fire and running over everything in its vicinity. I was constrained to wade through the water to a sand-spit, and there sleep. Next morning not a single tarantula was to be seen.

The nests of the sociable grossbeak, occasionally as large as a haystack, are often found in the branches of the immense aloes. These are veritable cities, whose population is extraordinarily varied, for besides the birds, insects and arachnids of many kinds dwell therein. One wonders as to what sort of communal life these creatures lead.

Soon after my departure from Namaqualand I took a modicum of revenge by writing a tale, which I entitled "Adons" (the Hottentot generic name for a captive baboon), and in which I described O'okiep as a simian community. A few of the leading inhabitants were characterized, but not by any means in an ill-natured way. I began the thing meaning to be spiteful, but soon the spirit of comedy seized my pen and wiped the ink of malice from it. I ended by including my friends as well as myself among the characters. Naturally, however, we were described as baboons of a somewhat superior type. In later days this

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tale has struck me as involving a somewhat unjustifiable reflection upon an unsophisticated but much-misunderstood tribe of veld-dwellers. To them I tender an apology. I endeavoured to include the narrative in a literary collection subsequently published by Mr. Fisher Unwin, but he discarded it, saying that no respectable publisher would print such a thing. I have never been able to find out why the simple narrative was so strenuously objected to. Some meaning—which was certainly never intended by the author—must have been read into it.

Peddie, where I next pitched my official tent, is a quaint little place. The district lies on the south-eastern coast, between the Great Fish River on the western, and the Keiskamma on the eastern side. The scenery is lovely. Smooth, grassy downs, divided irregularly by valleys brimming with virgin forest, slope down to the sapphire wonder of the Indian Ocean, which breaks in a ceaseless turmoil of snowy foam against an almost continuous range of sand-hills covered with velvet-like bosage. Each valley gives birth to a crystal stream, which laughs down to extinction in some clear lagoon of salt water, over the bar of which the waves surge and thunder when the tides run high.

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The village, like so many in the Eastern Province of the Cape Colony, was originally a military post. My Residency was a corner of the old fort, which had been handled and re-handled by the Public Works Department until it was almost fit to live in. But the ancient walls were full of cracks under the plaster, and these contained many snakes—a circumstance which occasionally made life exciting. It was nothing very unusual for the cook to rush shrieking from the kitchen, driven forth by a hooded serpent erect on its coiled tail and spitting venom. More than once such a creature was found curled up on the dressing-table in one or other of the bedrooms. Green tree-snakes abounded in the shrubbery; one often glided among the boughs of the rose-tree which was trained over the porch of the front door. Under the impression that such snakes were not poisonous, I would not allow those inhabiting the trees to be killed. Now, however, it has been determined that they are very venomous indeed, although they seldom bite.

The European inhabitants of the village and district were a curious lot. Among them were some of German blood, descendants of the members of that legion which, after the Crimean

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War, was sent to South Africa and granted land along the Eastern Frontier on military tenure. The English of the district were of British settler stock; their great-grandparents had come to South Africa in 1820. These people were pious, prejudiced, and not amenable to ideas. They had developed a distinctive drawling speech, and this peculiarity was reflected in their gait and in their manner of life. As they were all related by marriage, falling out with one meant strained relations with all. This does not imply that they did not fall out among themselves, for they often did, but they would always heal their differences for the purpose of banding together against any outsider whom they considered had used one of them spitefully.

I think that, on the whole, I was fairly popular at Peddie; probably more popular than I have ever been at any other station. There was no glaring local abuse against which I had to tilt, as has usually been the case in other places. However, one stand which I took on a public question raised the greatest indignation. The incident was a trivial one, but is, nevertheless, of interest. The great annual event in the district was the Agricultural Show. This resembled a moderately large fair more than anything else.

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A considerable number of prizes for stock and produce were awarded, Government contributing funds on the pound-for-pound principle. But no farmer would think of subscribing to the funds of the Agricultural Society unless he felt quite sure that at least the amount of his subscription would be refunded to him in prizes. According to immemorial usage, the Civil Commissioner was chairman of the Society; he and an elected Committee formed the executive. The position entailed a great deal of trivial, and therefore wearying work.

One item in the competition list was a prize of a guinea offered for the best pair of turkeys. Now the turkey does not flourish at Peddie. At the Show in question the only exhibit under the above class was that of a worthy old lady with whom I was acquainted and whose farm I occasionally visited. She entered for the prize and sent in a single turkey-hen. The bird was no longer in its first youth; it had a most debilitated appearance, and it possessed only two tail-feathers. It had other deficiencies, but these need not be described. The judges awarded to this bird the prize offered for a pair of turkeys, and when the item came up before the Committee, I

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objected to its ratification. I pointed out the obvious fact that the prize had been offered for two turkeys, a cock and a hen, and could, therefore, not properly be given for a single bird. I also indicated the creatures obvious deficiencies.

This aroused great indignation; by an overwhelming majority the Committee passed a resolution that the guinea should be paid. I then played what I thought was my trump card: I stated that I should decline to pay out the Government contribution towards the item. At this indignation swelled to wrath. Nevertheless I thought I had triumphed—at all events to the extent of half a guinea. But no; an astute old farmer, spectacles on nose and Rules of the Society in hand, arose and made a proposition which was carried by acclamation. One of the rules provided that in the case of an exhibit not mentioned in the prize list, a special prize might be awarded if the Committee considered such exhibit to be of conspicuous merit. Accordingly the venerable but debilitated bird with only two tail-feathers was awarded a special prize of a guinea. The exhibit would have been expensive at the price of one-and-sixpence.

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For several months the relations of the worthy old lady,—and she was related to five-sixths of the Britons of the district—looked askance at me and were not at all cordial in their welcome when I called at their farms.

Peddie contained a large Fingo Location; I fancy the inhabitants numbered about 15,000. Owing to the absence of any restrictions upon the sale of strong drink, and the unsatisfactory character of the headman of the largest clan, they were somewhat difficult to manage. In dealing with these people I found the headmen much in my way. The latter were, in several instances, drunken and dissolute, and they tried to exercise the powers of chieftainship. My experience was, as might have been expected, that the more drunken and dissolute the headmen were, the greater power they exercised among their people. The circumstance caused me to make some rather ill-advised recommendations as to the abolition of all heathen headmen in a lecture which I delivered before the Lovedale Literary Society in February, 1894. The subject was "The Native Question."

On that occasion, however, I made some remarks which, I think, will bear repetition,

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more especially as I am prepared to maintain their truth to-day:—

“Up to the present no Aryan race has ever secured a permanent footing on the African Continent. The Greeks tried it and failed; so did the Romans. The Persians conquered Egypt and turned the land into a waste, but were driven out after an occupation of ninety years. The French have attempted to colonize the north, with but indifferent results. Even the Portuguese, who have a strong admixture of African blood, have done no more in upwards of three centuries than occupy trading posts on the coast. Contrast with this the Portuguese and Spanish colonization of South America, which dates from the same century, as that in which the Portuguese established themselves in Africa. To-day South America, practically, where not Spanish is Portuguese—from the Atlantic Ocean to beyond the Andes.

“Our experiment is on a larger scale than any of these, but its ultimate success is by no means yet assured. We have a firm footing here, and we may retain that footing, but, on the other hand, we may easily lose it. Whether we do so or not lies with ourselves, but no condition is so dangerous as a feel-

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ing of blind security in the face of danger. Races, like individuals, decay under unfavourable conditions, and some developing conditions in South Africa show a decidedly unfavourable tendency as regards Europeans. Proceeding *pari passu* with the enormous growth of the Native population, we have the increase of the 'poor white' class. Unless scientific agriculture take the place of the slipshod methods now usually followed, unless the farmer gives up pastoral and often semi-nomadic pursuits and wrings the richness out of the soil by hard labour intelligently applied, that class will tend to increase, and to become more and more ineffectual each successive generation. We hope and believe it will be otherwise, but yet it is quite possible that the historian of the twenty-fifth century may have to record how the white race in South Africa vanished like the army of fifty thousand men that Cambyses sent across the Lybian Desert to destroy the shrine of Jupiter Ammon, and which perished to a man in the burning sands.

* * * * *

"Our measure of success in dealing with the Native Question depends largely upon the spirit in which we begin our work. If we

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want to succeed we must regard the Natives' welfare as our definite object—we must not try to work for our own ends alone. If we do we shall surely fail. 'Whoso loveth his life shall lose it.' Let this text be our motto in the crusade; it embodies a truth deeper than the depth of all the philosophies, wider than the mind of man has searched, save His mind who uttered it."

* * * * *

Splendid fishing was to be had in the tidal lagoons at the mouths of the larger rivers which entered the ocean through the Peddie district. At the mouth of the Great Fish River I used to stand on the rock-shelf at the eastern side and haul out "kabeljouw" occasionally weighing 50 lb. and upwards. However, for variety of sport the Keiskamma Mouth was the better. Along one side of its lagoon lay a submerged clay bank, on which much marine vegetation grew. This was the favourite feeding-ground of many excellent species of fish. But since the days I tell of a heavy flood has denuded this bank of its sub-aqueous flora, and the fishing has fallen off in consequence.

But to me the most enjoyable sport was

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that obtained at night by following the shoals of "springers" in a boat with a lighted lantern hung over the prow. The springer is delicious eating; he occasionally grows to a considerable size. The largest specimens I have handled were two I shot in the lagoon close to the mouth of the Kowie River. These scaled $11\frac{1}{4}$ lb. each. Springers will take no bait, but at night the glare of a lantern causes them to leap from the water and hurtle for some considerable distance through the air. I sometimes used a barbed spear. Occasionally my weapon was a "grain," made of large fish-hooks straightened out in the shafts, and with the latter fixed in a row at one side of a club. But it was with a "scoop" or landing net that I used to catch most. The effective use of this involved the exercise of a considerable amount of skill. One had to stand upright on the thwarts, over the lantern, and when the fish rose into the air, catch them flying. The boat had to be propelled slowly and noiselessly over the dark water—for it was only on moonless nights that this form of sport could be indulged in. The rower always ran the risk of getting a black eye or some other painful lesion, for the fish

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Photo by]

OFFICIAL STAFF AT PEDDIE, 1893.

[Mr. Braamwell.

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occasionally emerged after the boat had passed them, and leaped on board. The distances they could cover in thus skimming through the air were amazing, and the impact of the nose of a fish which had ten vital pounds of muscular tissue and bone behind it was apt to be at least disconcerting to any one struck, no matter on what part of the body.

The main Keiskamma lagoon had several lateral branches, which, although deep, were occasionally not more than twenty to thirty feet wide. Sometimes the shoals of springers would be driven by sharks into one or other of these. Then the sport would become indeed exciting, for the numbers of the fish were almost incredible, and the noise they made in striking the surface of the water was deafening. I recall one occasion when we disturbed a shoal so dense that we had to hurriedly put the lantern out and run the boat ashore to prevent her being sunk by the fish that leaped on board. The bank was so steep that we were unable to ascend it. Accordingly we had to sit still, endeavouring to protect our heads, and getting battered until we were black and blue. After the shoal had returned to the main lagoon, we had to spend upwards of

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half an hour flinging fish back into the water, for the boat was loaded almost to the thwarts, and would have sunk had we endeavoured to move her without getting rid of the bulk of the freight.

Mr. Rhodes, during his Premiership of the Cape Colony, annexed Pondoland, the last independent native state south of the Zambezi. This happened in 1894. I was offered a magistracy in the Native Territories, but although I had for long taken a keen interest in all branches of Native administration, I declined the offer. My main reason for so doing was that I did not wish to take my family to regions so remote from civilization. Moreover, Native children are not improving companions for youthful Europeans; men whose playmates in childhood were kaffirs usually have a secretive bent and a difficulty in giving direct answers to questions of fact.

However, Mr. Rhodes called me to Cape Town, and there he persuaded me to fall in with his wishes. He promised that if I would enter the Native Department he would, at the first opportunity, advance me to a Chief Magistracy. He was, he explained, unable to do so just then on account of the jealousy such

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an appointment would cause among my seniors. By the light of subsequent experience it became clear that performance of the promise would have been quite impracticable.

One night when dining at Groote Schuur, the conversation turned to the subject of Native administration. I expressed an opinion adverse to that advanced by Mr. Rhodes on a certain point, and he at once became extremely rude. Next morning Sir Sydney Shippard, who had been present, spoke to me about the matter. He condemned our host's conduct in most unmeasured terms, and added:—

“As a matter of fact Rhodes has been for so long surrounded by men who defer to him in every way, and hang on his every utterance as though it were that of an oracle, that he can no longer brook even a difference of opinion.”

I accepted the magistracy at Mount Frere, which lies on the north-western boundary of Pondoland. The district comprises that section of country lying between the Tina River and the Umzimvubu, which had been ceded to the Cape Colonial Government by the Baca Chief, Makaula, in 1875. The post was an important one, for the Baca tribe was warlike and

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powerful. Hitherto it had been looked upon as loyal, but Makaula was old and sickly, and the reins of authority were slipping more and more into the hands of a chief who belonged to the senior branch of the Baca royal house—if the term may be permitted. This chief and his family had been in exile, but were unwisely allowed to return. His name was Nomtsheketshe. He was a most unsatisfactory person in every relation, but the fact of his legitimacy made him formidable. His disloyalty was hardly concealed.

After sending my family to Fort Beaufort I started for my destination in a small cart drawn by two strong ponies, which I had purchased for the occasion. The journey was a long one; I traversed the Peddie, King William's Town, and Komgha districts; also the Transkei, Tembuland, a corner of Pondoland, and the Pandomisi country.

This drive of upwards of two hundred miles through a region nearly all of which was densely populated by Bantu Natives, made a deep impression on my mind. During the Native wars I had been through a considerable portion of Kaffirland, but then I was young and without any administrative rank. Now,

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however, it was different ; I felt the burthen and the spur of responsibility ; I had to think and to contrive, to deal with elemental conditions, to rule thousands of barbarians by moral force. I had to endeavour to adjust the life of an ancient people, the central and controlling influence of whose ethical system we had destroyed, to our very imperfect civilization.

The Native hut is, I think, a form of dwelling of a very old type. From the Sudan to the Amatole Mountains, from the Congo and the Niger to Mombasa and Inhambane, the myriad millions of Bantu have adhered universally to the same architectural form—a form which probably has not varied materially for twenty thousand years. Why, one wonders, has Africa never produced a type of building capable of lasting more than a few years? The characteristics of the people indicate permanency, their law-codes are elaborate and comprehensive, many of their customs probably date from the days of Abraham. The wooden pillows in use to-day among the Zulus and Swazies are identical in workmanship and design with the head-rests found in Egyptian tombs which were sealed up five thousand

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years ago. But the African apparently never built anything more permanent in the shape of a dwelling than the beehive-shaped structures of wattles, grass, and clay, with which all are familiar.

Along the whole course of my journey hut-villages seemed to crowd every suitable ledge. These monotonously repeated communities seemed to express the permanence of the African Native, who, changeless in essentials, has outstood the rise and fall of many mighty empires. They suggested that enormous reserve of *vis inertia* which, occasionally changing to rudimentary activity, expresses itself in those upheavals of slow, resistless energy with which Ethiopia confounds Europe or Asia every thousand years or so. Lafcadio Hearn pointed out that highly civilized races must disappear for the reason which caused the ichthyosaurs and other monsters of the prime to perish—their expensiveness. Twenty Chinamen—and probably thirty negroes in their aboriginal state—can live on what one European costs in energy units. Moreover, the fatal disease of a rapidly falling birth-rate has smitten the most civilized of the Caucasian races in the vitals; it seems, indeed, as though civilization

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and the birth-rate are, according to some law of Nature, bound to be in inverse ratio to each other. It is becoming abundantly clear that the probation of races is by no means past, and that before many decades have passed Europe's extremity may be Ethiopia's opportunity.

And to-day, after many years of labour and thought, I am inclined to invoke the much-disturbed shade of Macaulay's New Zealander and to regard it as quite possible that when, in the dim future, some archæologist is engaged in excavating from the rubbish-heaps that cover them the ruins of the foundations of those lordly public buildings which have recently been laid in Pretoria, there will be a village of beehive-shaped huts somewhere within sight. Before at least one of the dwellings will be a kaffir woman, squatting on her hams and grinding millet in a hollowed-out stone. I seem to see her pausing from her labour to hush the curly-headed baby slung to her shoulders, glancing the time at the alien examiner (he may have oblique eyes and a pigtail) grubbing among the (to her) meaningless stones.

CHAPTER XII

Mount Frere—Its inhabitants—Illicit liquor traffic—Inadequate laws—New laws framed and enacted—Elaborate precautions—Importation of detectives—The trap—Tragic history of the Amabaca—The Zulu fury—Madikane—'Ncapayi—A Zulu invasion—The White Hecatomb—Strange sequel to a victory—Death of Madikane—The eclipse—Defeat and death of 'Ncapayi—Defeat of the Pondos by a black calf—Makaula—His mistakes—Feast of the First Fruits—Hlokoza, the executioner—My "imbonga."

THE village of Mount Frere is, as regards scenery, most beautifully situated. Its site is a grassy plateau several thousand feet above sea-level, which commands magnificent views on three sides. To westward arise the densely forested Umgano and Manzinyama Ranges; to northward spring the enormous mass of the Intsiza Mountain and the soaring peaks of the Vinyanè; to eastward lies Pondoland, with the lofty Taban'kulu dominating its grassy hills and valleys.

The village was at that time inhabited solely by Government officials, traders, and lawyers, with their families, and a detachment of the Cape Mounted Rifles. The community was under what

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John Knox would have called "the monstrous regiment of women." There were, of course, exceptions, but for the most part the wives of the leading residents resembled a lot of spiteful cats. This made social intercourse exceedingly difficult.

The law strictly forbade the selling of liquor to Natives, but had been allowed in this respect to become a dead letter. Not alone was this so, but the disregard of what was a necessary enactment, as much in the immediate interest of the Natives as of the ultimate interest of the Europeans, was open and flagrant. The keeper of the principal hotel admitted to me that he sold liquor to every Native who had money to pay for it, and defied me to stop his doing so. I carefully examined the laws bearing on the subject (legislation in the Native Territories is, as a rule, by proclamation rather than by Act of Parliament) and found that not alone were they full of loopholes, but that the penalties prescribed in the event of a conviction being secured were quite inadequate. It was thus abundantly clear that, pending a change in the law, nothing effective could be done towards stopping the evil.

Broadly speaking, anything in the shape of a law can be enacted in the Native Territories so

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long as it is not in conflict with the principles of the British Constitution. Thus a most salutary power lies in the hands of the Governor—one which, I venture to think, is not exercised often enough. After due consideration I drafted a most drastic measure dealing with the traffic in strong drink—a measure which, in the hands of a firm magistrate, could be used as a bludgeon wherewith to break the evil head of any illicit trader. It prescribed as penalty for a first offence the infliction of a fine not exceeding £100, with imprisonment in default of payment, and an incapacity to hold any licence whatever for twelve months.

The Chief Magistrate of the territory, Mr. Walter Stanford, was sympathetic; Sir James Rose-Innes, who could always be depended upon to assist in the cause of temperance, was Attorney-General. By dint of copious correspondence—official, demi-official, and private—I managed to get my draft law adopted and enacted. But in the meantime many months elapsed, during which the demoralization of the Natives proceeded apace. Then several more months had to elapse before I managed to trap the hotel-keeper, for he adopted the most elaborate precautions for shielding his most mischievous traffic.

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His plan was well thought out, and for a long time he held me in check. He built a windowless room which communicated with his liquor-store by means of a small hatch. This room, being approached by a long, windowless passage, was absolutely dark except at the moment when the hatch was opened to pass out drink. Into the room the Natives would crowd, and there consume the brandy, for none was allowed to be carried away. A slight rise intervened between the hotel and the court-house. This rise was just high enough to prevent the police in attendance at the court from seeing what was going on around the hotel, but was at the same time low enough to enable a boy on stilts, who was kept walking up and down before the doorway of the passage, to see if any of the police were approaching. The latter had, of course, the right of entry to the hotel ; but if one of them made a move towards it, the boy would drop from his stilts, run inside, and give the alarm. Then one might see from fifty to a hundred Natives stream out from the passage and sit on the ground outside, waiting until the coast should again be clear. It may easily be seen how demoralizing this was, and how subversive to my authority ; also how difficult my task was in the matter of successfully

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grappling with the evil. But I am glad to be able to record that the grappling took place—with highly successful results.

But it was a tedious and expensive business. I found it impossible to obtain the services of competent detectives locally, the odium attaching to the office of informer being too great among the Natives. Accordingly, I had to send all the way to King William's Town for men suitable for the purpose. These men reported themselves at the Residency, which was some distance outside the village, in the middle of the night of their arrival. For six weeks they drank brandy at Government expense in the dark room. At first they were under suspicion as strangers, so could obtain no brandy except through others. It was, of course, necessary towards a conviction that some of the brandy purchased should be removed and produced in court at the trial. After the six weeks had elapsed, and the detectives had been more than once convicted before me for drunkenness, suspicion ceased to attach itself to them. Then, judging that the time was ripe, I prepared to strike.

The Chief Constable, acting under my instruction, searched the detectives at a concealed spot, from which the hotel could be seen, and pro-

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vided each with a small glass vial—so small that it could be concealed in the palm of the hand. Then, it being made quite certain that they had no liquor concealed upon their persons, the men were sent to the dark room, via the passage. The Chief Constable kept them in sight throughout the course. This happened early in the forenoon, soon after the den of iniquity had opened.

The detectives entered and demanded their usual morning tot, tendering a coin, which needed to be changed, in payment. As the barman turned to manipulate the till each detective managed to pour a small quantity of brandy from his mouth into the vial. Then they emerged and went straight to the Chief Constable, who was still concealed at his point of observation and had kept them in sight from the moment of their emergence. A prosecution, which resulted in a conviction, immediately followed. This operation had the effect of checking the liquor traffic for a time.

The district of Mount Frere ("Tshungwana" of the Natives) was full of interest. Not a hill, not a valley within its rugged bounds, but had some tragic association connected with it. One might say with almost literal truth that its whole

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surface had been soaked with human blood. The Amabaca tribe at the beginning of the nineteenth century occupied the present site of Maritzburg; the kraal of the "Great Chief" stood on what is now the Market Square. The history of this tribe is a true epic. I have never read anything that excelled it in tragic and dramatic interest. As I have told the story in detail elsewhere, I will here refer only to some of its more salient details.

When the Zulu power suddenly sprang to its baleful height under the terrible Tshaka, the peaceful clans by which the country now known as Natal was populated were smitten into confused ruin and flung southward like a breaking wave. When, after crossing the Umzimkulu River, the fugitives paused for a breathing space, Madikanè, the Baca chief, took the leadership by common consent.

Madikanè must have been, physically at least, quite an abnormal being. Those songs sung in his honour which have survived describe him as maned like a lion or feathered like a bird. This evidently means that his hair was longer than is usual with the Bantu, and that it grew on his body as well as on his head. He is also described as "a monster"—not in an offensive

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sense, but in the sense of being something transcendent or portentous. He is more than once described as "a white man." There is no doubt that he was of unusually light colour. Possibly he may have been descended from some waif off one or other of the many vessels cast away in early days on the then uncharted coast of Zululand. The air of the song composed for ceremonial purposes and relating to him has survived. It contains more true melody than does any other native tune I have heard. In its mournful cadences lurks a weird, haunting suggestion of something exotic—even of Northern Europe. It has struck me that it may be the modification of a tune, reminiscent of a youth spent in a civilized land, crooned by some woman whom the mischance of shipwreck exiled among savages.

Madikanè, after various and tragic vicissitudes, settled down in the present district of Mount Frere with his miscellaneous horde of stragglers from broken clans. As the chief grew older one of his sons, 'Ncapayi, came more and more into prominence. 'Ncapayi was a born leader of men, and must have been a soldier of genius. The "great place" of the chief was at Lutateni, on the western fall of the great Umzimvubu Valley. The eastern side climbs to the lofty

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Intsiza ("the place of refuge")—that convoluted mountain mass in which, throughout the constantly recurring intertribal wars of the vicinity, the beaten tribe could always find temporary asylum.

The Amabaca prospered. Numerically the tribe was not strong, for the hardships of a fugitive life had borne heavily on the women and children, and thus the usual supply from beneath to the ranks of those who fell under the spear in the fighting line was curtailed. Still, their prowess was such that they held their own successfully against such powerful neighbouring tribes as the Pondos and the Pandomisi. Eventually they waxed rich in cattle, so were able to intermarry with the women of their neighbours. Then once more the huts sheltered young children.

But Tshaka, the implacable, heard through his spies of the growing prosperity of the Amabaca, and determined to destroy them. This was in the early winter of 1824. The Zulu army, as was its wont, marched along the highest line of country, always camping on some lofty ground in a position which could easily be defended. At length it reached the Intsiza, and halted for the night on and around the massive western bluff.

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The Baca women and children had been sent into the depths of the Umgano Forest ; the Baca cattle, in charge of the boys, had been hurried into the deep gorges to eastward, among the foothills of the Drakensberg. The Baca army assembled on the level terraces above Lutateni, and gazed, with foreboding as to what the morrow might bring forth, on the myriad camp-fires with which the towering summit of the Intsiza was starred and spangled. 'Ncapayi meant to retreat, fighting every inch of the way. He realized the hopelessness of endeavouring to vanquish the iron legions of the terrible Zulu king.

But a miracle happened. Just before midnight a gale blew in across Pondoland from the sea : the Intsiza took on a dense mantle of cloud ; elsewhere the sky was clear and bright with glittering stars. Soon after dawn broke the cloud-mantle was swiftly swept away owing to a sudden change in the direction of the wind. Then it was seen that the Intsiza, from the summit to its middle ledges, was thickly covered with gleaming snow. Here and there against the dazzling whiteness could be seen black, ant-like figures. These were the survivors of the perished Zulu host. They were still numerous : probably they numbered between two and three thousand.

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The others had perished under the rigours of the Arctic night on the bleak upland, where no fuel had been obtainable.

'Ncapayi led his men through the Umzimvubu Drift—just below where the Rodé Mission Station now stands, and close to the site of the present bridge. He met the enemy in the steep, broken ground below the cliffs which ring the upper section of the mountain: they were endeavouring to escape along the Intsiza's flank, in the direction of the present village of Mount Ayliff. The Zulus were cut to pieces—only a few stragglers escaped,—to essay the fearsome task of telling to Tshaka the news of this his first reverse in the field.

Within a few days of this event, which, one might have supposed, would have filled the Amabaca with delight and confidence, Lutateni became a solitude. The elders of the tribe were called together, and it was decided to flee from Tshaka's vengeance. The implacable nature of the Zulu king was known: doubtless he would send an overwhelming force to destroy those who had dared to withstand his hitherto resistless soldiery. So the Amabaca gathered the hardly ripened grain from the fields, collected their scattered cattle, and set their faces towards the unknown

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south, their only object being to put as great a distance as possible between themselves and the Zulu terror.

This phase would be only the opening of the epic. From here the tale would show how the aged Madikanè, with the lithe, panther-like 'Ncapayi handling the forefront of the battle, cut his way through the Pandomisi and Tembu forces to the Gqwetshini Mountain in the present Xalanga district; how the Amabaca there settled down and once more began cultivating new fields; how the Tembu and Gcaleka chiefs, fearful of the intruders, assembled two large armies and delivered an overwhelming attack. It would tell how the hiding-place of the old chief was betrayed by a woman under torture, and how he was slain, and how the high Sun hid his face in the heavens in terror of the tragic deed, for the slaying took place on the 20th of December, 1824, on which date a total eclipse occurred.

It would further tell how the victorious armies, dismayed at what they believed to be the result of their vengeance, melted like wreaths of smoke; of how the Baca women and children were all slain or captured early in the day, and of how 'Ncapayi cut his

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way through the enemy to the north-east, and a few days later captured many hundreds of Tembu women and children, which he and his men took to themselves in substitution for the partners and progeny they had lost. It would also tell how, after many wanderings, the remnant of the Amabaca returned and once more settled in the valleys around Luta-teni, where they again waxed prosperous. It would tell how, in 1845, 'Ncapayi in an evil hour declared war on Faku, the Pondo chief, and marched with an army into Pondoland, there to meet with a crushing defeat and to be hurled, with the flower of his force, over a cliff in the Umzimvubu Valley, where he lay on a rock-ledge in agony for days, both his arms broken, while the awed Pondo warriors gazed at the maimed leader, afraid to dispatch him until Faku sent word that he was to be put out of his misery.

The epic would not close even here; its next canto would tell of another great act in the drama—one which happened in 1867, when Umquikela, regent of Pondoland, sent an army to attack Makaula, who had succeeded 'Ncapayi in the chieftainship—and of how, when a black calf only a few hours old ran

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blaring down the hill from the deserted kraal at Lutateni, and was taken by the Pondos to be 'Ncapayi's ghost, it so filled them with terror that they fled, while the Amabaca slaughtered them like unresisting sheep, until the Tyinira River ran red.

I think it will be admitted that the foregoing gives material for an epic such as has seldom been equalled and never surpassed.

When I dealt with the tribe in 1894 Makaula was an old man and suffered from a complication of physical ills. Nevertheless he lived for another fifteen years. He had upwards of thirty wives and innumerable children. Government made him an allowance of £300 per annum, but, being a bad financier, he was in a condition of chronic debt. He owed money to every trader in the district, and a good deal of careful diplomacy had to be exercised to prevent his being sued, for had a writ been issued and his cattle seized trouble with the tribe would certainly have followed.

Makaula, the Baca chief, had substantial claims upon the gratitude of Government. A few years previously, when the flame of war spread north-eastward from the Kei River,

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when the Pandomisi in the adjoining district of Qumbu broke into rebellion and murdered their magistrate (Mr. Hope), the Baca warriors turned out, attacked the Pandomisi in the Tsitsa Valley, and defeated them. Had Makaula then declared against the Europeans, as the Pondo chief 'Nquiliso strongly urged him to do, almost every trader and Government official in the Native territories would have had his throat cut. But Makaula had not managed the affairs of the tribe well during his independent chieftainship. For one thing, he fell completely under the influence of the witch-doctors and slaughtered hundreds—many of them his most devoted friends—at the bidding of those miscreants. Among those thus immolated was Gayana, the father of his “Great Wife.” This caused a split in the tribe which was never mended. The “Great Wife,” Mama-gayana, for years wandered about the district in a half-insane condition, stirring up sedition, and Makaula felt that it would be unsafe to interfere with her. Moreover, he made an irreparable mistake in consenting to the return of Nomtsheketshe, to whom I referred in the last chapter. This man, owing to his legitimacy, gained many followers, and

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was ever afterwards a sore thorn in the old chief's side.

The Baca tribe carried on the ritual of its ancient tribal customs long after such had fallen into disuse among other Natives. Most notable among these may be mentioned the "incubi," or Feast of the First Fruits. In autumn, when the crops began to ripen, all the men of the tribe assembled at the chief's "Great Place." Previous to this messengers had been sent out to steal, from the fields of tribes outside the Baca borders, a maize-head, a head of millet, a pumpkin, and a stick of "imfe" or native sugar-cane. These were crushed and mixed together by the war-doctor in the skull of some man who had been celebrated in his lifetime for prowess in the field or wisdom in the council. At daybreak on the morning of the full moon the chief would partake of the mixture in the calf-kraal. Then we would rush forth, just as the sun was rising, and hurl a spear towards the east.

When the chief had a son just entering upon manhood, it used to be the custom to kill some old man who had shown signs of special ability, mix the "shwama"—as the con-

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coction of the stolen fruits was called—in a cup made from his skull, and cause the young man and his blood-brothers to partake of the mixture. Even in the degenerate days of my residence, old men of any renown showed a marked disinclination against straying into lonely places, or even being out of their huts after dark.

Hlokoza, Makaula's one-time Lord High Executioner, was still much in evidence when I lived at Mount Frere. But his glory had departed, and as there was hardly a Native in the district who had not lost a relative at his powerful hands, he was not popular. Hlokoza was a splendidly built man, and in his way a genial sort of a ruffian. Each year at "incubi" time, when a wave of excitement passed over the district, he used to take refuge close to the Residency. We had many long talks together. I am quite sure that whatever faculty did duty as his conscience never troubled him in respect of the many victims whose necks he had twisted.

In those days the "imbonga," or "praiser," was still a recognized institution. Each chief had his praiser, and as I ranked as a chief I did not escape the embarrassing attentions

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of this functionary. It was rather a tax on both one's modesty and one's patience to be constrained to listen, from early morning till dewy eve, to a man of strong lungs declaiming about one in terms of the most exaggerated hyperbole—comparing one to the lion for bravery, to the serpent for subtlety, to the greatest of the great men of the past for wisdom, and to the thunderstorm for power. I was, like nearly all human beings, amenable to flattery, but one soon got tired of it when laid on so thickly. After I had heard a circumstantial account of my own supposed mighty deeds and a catalogue of quite mythical illustrious ancestors, recited over and over again with ever-increasing poetic licence for several days in succession, I felt I had had more than enough, so I presented my “im-bonga” with an old blanket, and he departed, apparently content. As he went up the hillside he paused every few yards, turned round, and shouted newly coined epithets of praise at me. Fainter and fainter grew his voice until it could no longer be heard.

A few months afterwards, however, the “im-bonga” returned. Again he extolled me to the skies; again he called upon the heavens

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above and the earth beneath to do homage to my majesty and worth. Again he compared my beauty to that of a lofty tree and my somewhat meagre figure to that of the fattest black ox in the Baca pastures. But my self-esteem was unmoved: the novelty had worn off; I had heard it all before, and too often. I ordered him to depart, but he praised me all the more. I determined not to give in and buy him off, so he praised me steadily for a fortnight. I afterwards found out that my servants fed him, secretly, from my kitchen. I had him removed by the police, but as soon as he was released from custody he returned. In the end I surrendered, but not unconditionally. I agreed to give him half a crown and an old shirt, he making a solemn promise never to praise me again. After the sum agreed upon and the garment had been delivered, my praiser once more ascended the hillside, rending the heavens with the clamour of his poetic eulogy. But he kept his promise, for I neither saw nor heard him more.

CHAPTER XIII

Bad roads—Travels through the district—Collection of historical information—Tribal music—Burial of a witch-doctor—Witch-killing—Special courts—Pernicious effect of our legal system—Strange native customs—Pondoland—Port St. John's—Sigcau—On the warpath—Nomshe-ketshe—"The Big Little Jones"—The raven—A sad case—A practical joke—The war-doctor—The Pondomisi—A credulous lady—Sun-signalling in the dark—Wild dogs—Transferred to Nqamakwe—Dr. Browning—A practical Christian—Nqamakwe Residency—Blythswood—Christian heathenism—A remittance man—Tragedy of a pair of boots—A victim of misplaced confidence.

WITH the exception of the main road through the district, which was kept in barely passable order by Government, there was hardly a track within the Mount Frere bounds along which a wheeled vehicle could travel in safety. The various traders, where it was practicable, used ramshackle wagons for conveying goods to their stations, and the possibility of a capsized or two while on the way was always taken into account. I accordingly did all my travelling on horseback, a mounted policeman leading my pack-horse. The country was

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exceedingly mountainous, lying, as it did, among the tumbled foothills of the Drakensberg. My duties often took me out of the village; in fact, there was hardly a corner in the district which I did not visit at one time or another. Occasionally I heard of some old Native who had been an actor in the tremendous drama of the Tshaka wars. Such men I always made a point of visiting. I have sat for hours next to such a patriarch, feeding him, as he lay on his mat, with teaspoonfuls of brandy and soup, endeavouring thus to stimulate his flagging memory. I was thus enabled to collect some valuable historical information which would otherwise have been irretrievably lost. Many a tragic recital of events in those days of blood and fire have I listened to; many a cicatrice on limb or trunk, caused by the long-rusted Zulu spear, have I inspected, listening the while to the thrilling details of the battle in which it had been inflicted.

An interesting experience it was when Makaula sent his brother Diko down from the Matatiele border with a lot of picked singers to chant the tribal songs. These my wife noted down and harmonized. When

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published they attracted some attention. One very old man, when he heard the air of the song which had been dedicated to his long dead chief played upon the piano, burst into tears and said he could now die happy, as he knew that the numbers of praise relating to his old ruler would henceforth live in the ears of men. The collection of songs, each with a translation of the words and where possible a short historical sketch of the circumstances under which each particular item was composed, was subsequently published in the *Pall Mall Magazine*, under the head of "Kaffir Music." The Baca tribal song is a remarkable production, being quite Gregorian in style. The following circumstance will give some idea of the veneration in which it is held.

I once had occasion to lead a large armed party of Bacas to support an ultimatum which had been delivered to the chief of a neighbouring tribe who had been giving trouble. I noticed that when we marched the tribal song was not sung. I asked one of Makaula's sons why this was. After some hesitation he told me that as the men forming the "impi" were not satisfied as to the justice of the

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cause they were being led to support they declined to sing the song of their ancestors.

I recall one curious circumstance. A noted female witch-doctor was reported as having died from misadventure. Strongly suspecting foul play, I went to the scene of the tragedy to hold an inquest on the body. It turned out, however, that the woman's death had been purely accidental. The place was a long way from the magistracy, so the woman had been dead for some days before I arrived. Accordingly a grave had been dug and every preparation had been made for immediate interment. I was present at the obsequies. Every bit of metal, such as bangles, wire brooches, etc., was first removed from the body, broken into small pieces, and thrown into the grave. Then a large handful of hair was cut off from the front of the head, immediately over the forehead. Then an earthen bowl half-full of water was brought, and into this a bunch of twigs and leaves belonging to an aromatic shrub (a species of *Artemisia*) was broken up fine. With this mixture the head, face, and neck of the corpse were washed. What remained was poured into the grave. Then the bowl was smashed, and the frag-

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ments thrown in as well. This interested me exceedingly, because I remembered having read an old book on the customs of the North American Indians, and in this the burial of a medicine-man was described. The ritual was almost identical, down to the use of the *Artemisia*, various species of which are indigenous to the American Continent.

Not long before the annexation of Pondoland the boundary-line between that territory and Mount Frere had been fenced—with a view to stopping cattle-stealing, which was a constant source of irritation. This fence ran within between two and three miles of the village, and people “smelt out” by the witch-doctors for supposed necromancy used to be brought right up to it and there killed, in defiance of protest. Often the police were present, within a few feet of where the atrocity was being consummated, but they were powerless to interfere.

For some time after the annexation the very doubtful boon of trial by jury was not extended to Pondoland. All crimes, therefore, including capital ones, were dealt with by a special court consisting of the Chief Magistrate of East Griqualand and two ordinary magistrates.

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This system suited the Natives far better than that under which circuit courts were introduced. Next to the liquor traffic nothing has so much demoralized the Natives as the European legal system. It would have been a priceless boon had attorneys and law-agents been prevented from establishing themselves beyond the territorial border. When the Amabaca first came under British rule it was a point of honour with every native to plead guilty if he had committed the crime laid to his charge. But with the advent of the lawyer all this was changed. Thus a premium was at once placed on lying in a large number of cases, and a tribe which had been noted for its truthfulness became steeped in mendacity.

I will give an instance illustrating how a magistrate not familiar with Native customs may be misled. I went on one occasion to a remote part of the district for the purpose of settling a dispute as to the boundary-line between two petty chiefs. A woman who was called upon to give evidence was asked as to whether she knew a certain man who was interested in the issue. She replied in the direct negative. I happened to know, from the statements of other witnesses, that she and

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this man had lived within a few hundred yards of each other for many years. Naturally I concluded that she was lying. I told her so, and added that I was sure she must have seen him over and over again. But she adhered firmly to her statement that she had never either seen or heard of him. What I regarded as her mendacious obstinacy angered me exceedingly. I was on the point of ordering her arrest for perjury when my Native clerk bent down and whispered to me the word "inhlonipu," and in a flash I understood. The man in question happened to be the uncle of the woman's husband, so according to custom she was not supposed to be aware of his existence nor of the existence of any male relative of her husband in the ascending line. It would have been disgraceful for her to have admitted having ever seen or even heard of any such relative, or even to have used any word in which the dominant syllable of his name occurred. This is, surely, one of the strangest tricks of that strange entity, convention. But it is quite probable that could we step aside and look impartially at some of the conventions we accept as integral parts of our civilization they would appear just as ridiculous.

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I made several trips to Pondoland, and on such occasions made it a point to travel by the least frequented routes. Several of the localities I visited in that tract where the Tina, the Tsitsa, and the Umzimvubu Rivers have carved tremendous gorges through the lofty table-land they traverse on their way to the sea were so isolated that many of the inhabitants had never seen the face of a European, and the children used to flee, shrieking, when I appeared.

Among other places I visited Port St. John's, the vicinity of which contains some of the most magnificent scenery I have ever beheld. The deep, blue, tidal lagoon, curved like a scimitar, lies between enormous mountain ranges, clothed with dense forest and crowned with steep cliffs. From the great rampart known as the Eastern Gate one can look down on the sleeping water and mark the immense sharks lying along the bottom of the channel like waiting torpedoes. The climate is tropical, and rain falls frequently throughout the year. Consequently the forests are usually dripping wet and the vegetation is extraordinarily luxuriant. On one occasion, when exploring, I came upon a tract where

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the trees were densely festooned with grena-dilla vines, which happened to be full of ripe fruit. Probably some bird had dropped a seed there years ago. The growth appeared to be spreading in every direction.

I have never known a locality so full of snakes, ticks, and insects. The butterflies and moths are marvellous in point of variety and beauty. It is a true naturalists' paradise, for insects appear to be as plentiful at one season as at another, and those perplexing problems in respect of the summer and winter forms of the South African Rhopalocera could here be studied under exceptionally favourable conditions. The ticks are a terrible pest: so much so that no cattle can be kept on the coast strip in the vicinity of Port St. John's. Several times, after walking for a few hundred yards through long grass in light-coloured clothes, my trousers have looked as though thickly smeared with red paint.

In 1895 the Pondo chief Sigcau gave a lot of trouble, and Government accordingly decided to arrest and deport him, under a proclamation specially issued for the occasion by the Governor. Sigcau refused to give himself up, so a force was assembled for the purpose of

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arresting him. Accordingly I armed a thousand of my Bacas with long Snider rifles and marched in to occupy the 'Ntaba 'Nkulu, that high mountain mass which rises from the centre of, and dominates, Eastern Pondoland.

In raising this force a somewhat awkward situation arose. Nomtsheketshe, to whom a large section of the tribe (owing to Makaula's increasing infirmity) now acknowledged allegiance, failed to bring in the contingent I had requisitioned from him. There was no difficulty in getting the necessary number of men from elsewhere, but I felt somewhat uneasy about leaving the truculent and disloyal old ruffian, with his followers, in my rear. However, there was nothing to do but obey orders. As it happened, Sigcau surrendered at the eleventh hour, so there was no fighting. Had there been, I feel sure Nomtsheketshe would have given trouble.

A couple of days after I had marched, Nomtsheketshe, to save his face, turned up at the Residency with his contingent. He walked right into the house, followed by several of his armed followers, and demanded meat and coffee. These were, of course, refused. My wife had a daughter of Makaula in the house.

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The wicked old chief got such a telling off that he really must have been impressed, for he followed me to 'Ntaba 'Nkulu next day with the lying excuse that the death of one of his children had prevented his obeying my instructions. But I packed him back over the border at once.

We spent about a week on the mountain. The season was winter. We had no tents or other camp equipment; however, as the weather was fine and mild, we were not uncomfortable. But within forty-eight hours of our departure for home a heavy snowstorm wrapped the whole range, and snow lay over a foot thick where we had been encamped. Had our departure been delayed there would have been heavy loss of life.

Sigcau appealed to the Supreme Court against his deportation, and won his case on the ground that according to the terms of the British Constitution legislation by proclamation could not be directed against an individual. Mr. Jones, an attorney of Kokstad, a man of extremely short stature, conducted the case. So Sigcau returned in triumph to Pondoland, and for months afterwards a song, composed in honourable commemoration of the event,

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was sung at every Pondo feast. Its refrain, translated, ran thus: "Ha—Ho—the Big Little Jones."

While on the border of Pondoland a very sad case came under my notice. At one of the newly formed camps there was a somewhat large detachment of the Cape Mounted Riflemen. One of the officers was a friend of mine. He was very highly strung, and was subject to fits of nervous depression. A tame raven was the pet of the camp: this chartered libertine used to wander from tent to tent, perpetrating mischief of various kinds. The bird was very destructive, but on account of its amusing qualities was tolerated. For some unexplained reason the creature had a special predilection for my friend's tent, where it became an intolerable nuisance. One day he flung a boot at it, hurting the bird so much that it died a few days afterwards. Great indignation resulted. The men turned out and gave the raven a military funeral. Then they began systematically revenging themselves on the slayer. They used to steal up to his tent at night and "quork"; if he passed two or three men, one or other of them would "quork" as soon as the unhappy

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man's back was turned. This persecution, which a normally healthy man would have laughed at, completely broke my poor friend down. As a matter of fact he died as a result of it. I have always considered that this episode showed a strange lack of sympathy. But it was only the humorous side of the situation that was perceptible to the men. It is strange that they should not have seen that the victim was wilting daily under the continuous worry. But the gregarious instinct in healthy man usually prompts him to the cruelty of driving one who is stricken from the herd. And after all this process may be necessarily an integral part of the evolutionary system.

About this time two Indian coolies collected a fairly large herd of cattle in Pondoland. They gave themselves out to be doctors and diviners, and went from kraal to kraal pretending to tell fortunes and cure diseases. The principal item in their equipment for these rôles was a supply of those chemical toys known as "Pharaoh's serpents," or "serpent's eggs." When one of these is set alight it expands in the semblance of a writhing, coiling snake. The people were terror-stricken at this uncanny manifestation:

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they thought the lumps were the eggs of "Icanti," the mythical serpent which is supposed to have its home in river pools situated in deep mountain gorges. After a triumphal progress, during which the herd of cattle increased like a rolling snowball, the two astute scoundrels were stopped just before they reached the Natal border, and punished under the useful section of the Penal Code which forbids, under heavy penalties, the practice of supposed witchcraft.

When at the military camp at Flagstaff I heard of an amusing practical joke, which, however, had serious results. A certain doctor who had been transferred from an Imperial regiment to the Cape Mounted Rifles had exhibited signs of an excited condition of mind when it was thought that there was a prospect of a Pondo attack. He usually wore a pair of trousers bearing a red stripe which belonged to the uniform of his previous regiment. Even after the most anxious moments following the annexation had passed, there is no doubt that Sigcau, the Pondo chief, contemplated fighting, and that he was anxious to know whether, in the event of war, Imperial troops would be in the field against him.

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One day Sigcau visited the camp for the purpose of conferring with the magistrate. The doctor was present at the interview, wearing his striped trousers, and it could be clearly seen that the chief was interested in the stripe and what it might imply. He paid, in fact, more attention to the doctor's breeches than to anything else. The doctor noticed this, and subsequently made several references to the circumstance. The other officers, avid of amusement, began playing up to his disquietude. The forest reached to within a few hundred yards of the camp. One day the doctor and two companions were taking a walk in its vicinity. When they got quite close to it a naked kaffir boy rushed out from the cover carrying an ochre-smeared note in a cleft stick. This he thrust into the hand of the astonished doctor; then he fled, without uttering a word, back among the trees. The note was addressed in a sprawling hand: "To the War Doctor, Flagstaff Camp." It read as follows: "We know you are the War Doctor. Beware. You are being watched." The doctor became much concerned. He hurried back to the camp and laid the note before the commanding officer, demanding that

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a special guard should be placed outside his tent. He declined, on any pretext, to leave the camp, even to go for a short walk. He was fully persuaded that in the forest lurked an "impi" of natives who meant to capture and take him before the bloodthirsty Sigcau, who would doubtless doom him to a horrible death. After a few weeks had elapsed it leaked out that the whole affair had been a joke. But the medico was so disgusted at the "sell" that he resigned his position and left Pondoland.

A few miles from the border of Bacaland, in the Pandomisi country, a family of Bushmen dwelt in a rocky valley. These were the last survivors of a clan which for many years the Pandomisi chiefs had protected for the supposed rain-making powers of its members. These waifs were liberally supported by voluntary contributions of goats and cattle from the surrounding tribes. Fortunately for them the mountainous nature of the country precluded long droughts, summer invariably bringing a certain number of thunderstorms. But the Bushman cannot flourish in circumscribed surroundings: he must lead a wandering life, or wither. I recently heard that of the clan only one member, a very old woman, survived.

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The Pandomisi tribe has a stirring history; but I do not feel disposed to deal with it in detail, for the reason that I have not had sufficient opportunity of verifying such details as I have been able to collect. The Pandomisi have one curious custom. In Pandomisi history the chief most honoured is 'Ngwanya, who flourished some hundred and fifty years ago. When this chief died, for some reason or another his body was disposed of by being bound to a green ironwood log and sunk in a very deep pool of the Tina River. The people believe this pool to be bottomless, but it cannot be more than two hundred feet deep at the most. The body of every chief since 'Ngwanya has been disposed of in the same manner. Every year, at a certain time, the carcasses of slaughtered oxen, baskets of grain, and large earthen pots of beer are cast into the pool. Native women usually wear skirts of tanned calfskin, and in crossing a stream they lift these high enough to prevent their getting wet. But in crossing by any of the drifts through the Tina the women allow their skirts to trail in the water.

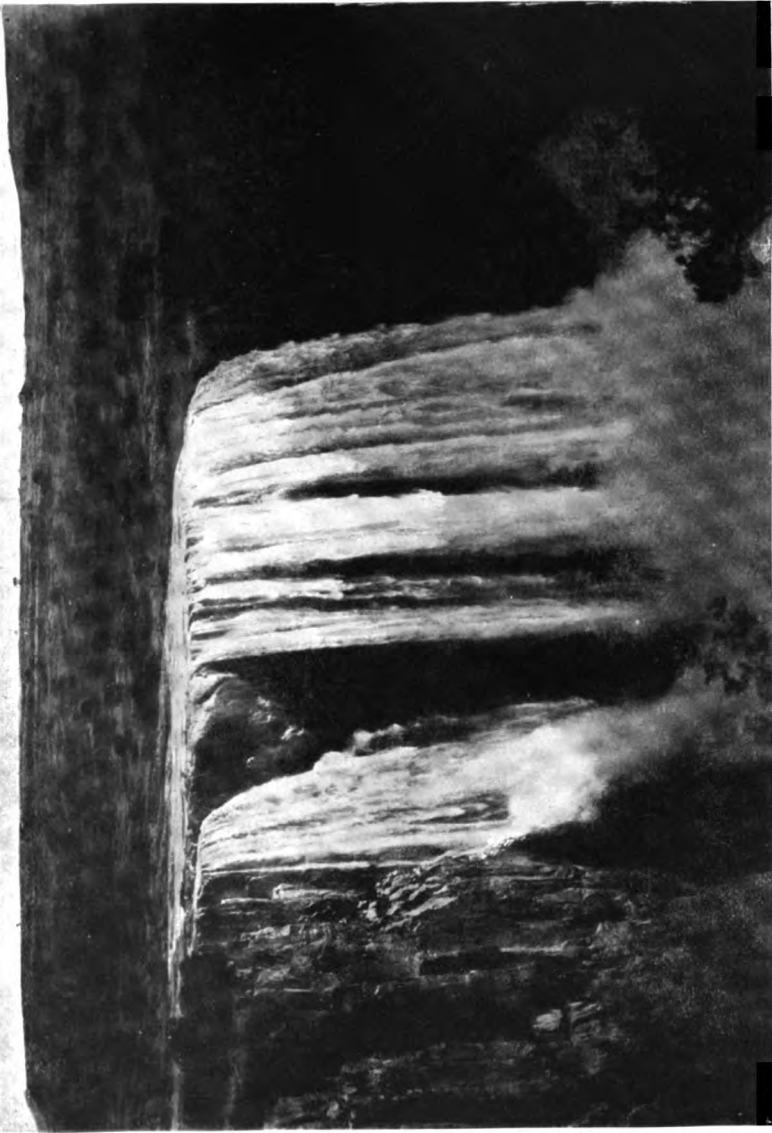
Running in the same direction as the Tina is the Tsitsa, the largest river of the Pandomisi

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country. About nine miles below the drift on the Umtata Road are the celebrated Falls, where the river plunges over a vertical cliff into a chasm some four hundred feet deep. When the river is swollen by heavy rains in the Drakensberg or its foothills, the Falls afford a most magnificent spectacle. They were once the scene of a grim tragedy.

In 1828 Tshaka's armies harried Pondoland and penetrated as far south as the Bashee River. When Tshaka, who had halted at the Umzimkulu, on the border of what is now Natal, recalled his forces, they broke up into several divisions, sweeping the territories they passed through of cattle. One division was engaged by the whole Pandomisi force, and the battle took place just above the Falls. The Tsitsa was swollen, and when the Zulus were driven into the river, fighting hand to hand, friend and foe were swept, in the grim death-grapple, into the chasm. The Pandomisi say that on wild nights the shouts of the combatants can still be heard echoing in the gloomy depths.

An elderly Anglo-Indian lady, mother of my European clerk, came to live with her son at Mount Frere. She was exceedingly formal



[Mrs. T. L. Graham.]

THE TSITSA FALLS.

Photo by]

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and conventional. On arriving she was eloquent in praise of a charming and gentlemanly man who had been her companion in the post-cart journey from Natal to Kokstad. The weather had been cold; this individual had provided her with tea and with hot-water bottles for her feet. He expounded on the theme of the scenery with the tongue of a poet; the values of light and shade on the mountain and the forest were appraised with artistic discrimination. He was lavish of those delicate little attentions with which a polished and apparently kindhearted man of the world surrounds any lady who happens to be his travelling companion. But eventually, a dreadful rumour reached us; soon this was dreadfully confirmed. The polite, polished stranger turned out to be none other than the public hangman, who was travelling in the furtherance of his professional duties.

The lady in question had travelled extensively, but had never got over what was apparently a congenital condition of credulity. Her son and I used to beguile uneventful hours by experimenting as to how many obvious impossibilities we could induce her to believe. During the Pondo crisis Government had a

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heliograph system installed, by means of which we were in communication with the various military posts. On one occasion rain fell heavily and without intermission for nearly three weeks; during that time we never caught a glimpse of the sun. Yet day by day we used to bring Mrs. T. helio messages supposed to have been just received. No matter how deeply banked the streaming clouds were, she never dreamed of questioning the authenticity of the news.

Another romance she believed in was to the effect that Government intended establishing a service of penny steamboats on the Umzimvubu River, between Port St. John's and Mount Frere. This would have been almost as impossible as such a service ascending the Victoria Falls.

After a little more than a year and a half spent at Mount Frere I was transferred to Nqamakwe, the largest and richest district in the Transkei proper—that is, the territory lying between Tembuland and the Cape Province. We packed all our belongings on two “buck” wagons and started on our long trek southward. We rested the first night at Qumbu, where we renewed our acquaintance with Dr.

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Browning, the District Surgeon. He was a very lovable, but at the same time a most peculiar character. His house—a mere shackle—was empty of all except a few deal packing-cases in which he stacked his drugs—a heap of straw, and an old overcoat. Browning endeavoured to apply the tenets of Christianity literally: if he possessed anything another needed, he at once supplied the want. He drew his stipend of £200 from Government, but never charged fees. If grateful patients cared to pay something for his services he accepted it, but only after careful inquiries as to whether the money could conveniently be spared. Then he at once sought for some one who was in need of cash. Needless to say that in this quest he seldom had to go far.

Browning was the only man I have ever met who knew the Thirty-nine Articles off by heart. He was extremely well read on certain lines. What his actual religious belief was I never could find out. I have somewhere seen Christianity (in the real, and therefore not conventional sense of the term) described as a form of genius. In my long life I have only met six men who possessed Christianity of this type, and Browning was one of them.

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We left Qumbu late in the afternoon, for it was the time of full moon and we wished to spare the cattle by doing our travelling at night and allowing them to rest during the heat of the day. Just before we started Browning came to bid us farewell, bringing two presents. One was a large calabash full of delicious native beer, which we gratefully accepted. The other was a most villainous-looking cur dog, which, so far as its moral character was concerned, was guaranteed as a canine paragon. Much to poor Browning's distress I gently but firmly declined to accept the animal. I can still recall the sight of Browning as he stood, holding the dog tethered by a reim, as the wagon rolled away. I never saw this abnormal but lovable being again. He was drowned in the *Drummond Castle* off Ushant in 1896.

Soon after our leaving Mount Frere a horrible tragedy occurred just on the north-eastern side of the Intsiza, on the Kokstad Road. The post-cart broke down, and the driver went away to try and obtain assistance, leaving the passengers—the wife of a trader and her two children—with the vehicle. When the driver returned he found nothing but

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blood and torn clothing. A pack of wild dogs from one of the Pondoland forests had devoured the unhappy passengers.

It was, I think, after ten days' travelling that we reached Nqamakwe. There was no village; not even a trading station. The Residency stood high on a grassy ridge, overlooking a series of softly-swelling, smooth-swarded hills, between which streams of clear water flowed. These streams took their rise in swampy hollows at the base of the ridge on which the Residency stood, which were starred with millions of white arum lilies. One abrupt hill overlooked the Residency from the northward, and the face of this was covered with dense virgin forest—the only growth of its kind within a radius of many miles. Grouped around the Residency were the dwellings of my subordinate officials, the public offices, and the gaol. My house was almost new; it was a large bungalow with a veranda extending around all four sides, and commanding a noble view. An old orchard, planted some years previously by the first Resident with the Fingo people, stood some little distance away, but just around the house the soil was still untouched. Here I sub-

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sequently laid out, at my own cost, a flower-garden and an orchard which contained the most improved varieties of fruit trees. My rose-garden was glorious; it contained upwards of eighty varieties, and most of my favourites were duplicated or triplicated. The soil was rich, water was plentiful, and the result of my trouble was very gratifying.

One day, in wandering through the forest, I discovered something that surprised me. Nestling among the ancient tree-trunks were quantities of violets. I have often wondered as to how these sweet-scented exotics originated—as to whose hand had cast the seed from which they sprang in this remote African forest.

Within three miles of the Residency, just beyond the rolling, grassy downs, nestled the Presbyterian Mission Station of Blythswood, the largest but one institution of its class south of the Orange River. Blythswood was devoted mainly to the training of Native teachers and to industrial education. The members of the staff were nearly all Scotch; the little community was, in some respects, the strangest I have ever had to deal with. Instead of their displaying towards each other anything like the Christianity they conventionally professed,

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envy and uncharitableness reigned. On Sundays all the Europeans belonging to the institution met at church. At the entrance they greeted each other, if not with a holy kiss at least with apparently cordial handshakings and inquiries as to the health of their respective families. But on Mondays all this was changed: then the community was divided into at least three mutually antagonistic cliques, each hating the others with apostolic fervour. There were, of course, exceptions; my remarks apply to the majority. Strangely enough these people co-operated quite faithfully in respect of their work, and that work—more especially the branches undertaken by the ladies of the staff—was excellently done. Their psychology was an interesting study; it was passing strange to note how well most of them knew the letter of those Scriptures which should have been their rule of life, but how ignorant they were, at the same time, of its spirit. I often—but I regret to say, quite unsuccessfully—endeavoured to demonstrate to them the essential paganism of their way of living.

I well remember the advent of a certain stranger—also a Scotsman—whose stock-in-trade

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consisted of a seedy horse and an unlimited reserve of self-assurance. Nothing was known of him. However, one of the teachers, who appeared to take a considerable interest in horse-flesh and politics, received this stranger into the bosom of his family. "Captain B." was brought up to the Residency and introduced as belonging to the Black Watch. I had "ma doots"—very strong ones—but knew that no good could come of my attempting to express them. The Captain's swagger did not bear the military hall-mark. Month after month came and went, but the alleged Black Watchman stayed on: he evidently liked his quarters. As his raiment wore out he appeared clad in the habiliments of his host, whose stature was approximately similar to his—a circumstance which may have had some bearing on the Captain's choice of an habitation. The host, who affected a horsy appearance, owned a certain pair of hunting-boots in which he took great pride. Even these the distinguished guest frequently borrowed; eventually he was permitted to appropriate them. Here was indeed faith.

Captain B. become engaged to a lady of the vicinity. Faith had began to wane, but this enterprising deed rehabilitated him—for a

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time. He invited a number of people—myself and my family included—to accompany him on a trip around the world on his steam yacht. He offered those of us who were fond of fishing several miles of the salmon-rich Tay to cast flies in. But the oft-promised remittances failed to arrive. Faith waned, waxed faintly, and waned again. Eventually Captain B. went to King William's Town and there disappeared. It says much for the influence he retained to the very end that he took with him the host's favourite boots. When these were not returned, according to solemn promise, a cry of bitter anguish went up from the bereaved owner.

Some months afterwards I happened to be in Cape Town, *en route* for Europe on sick-leave. Whom should I meet swaggering down Adderley Street but Captain B. ! He greeted me with effusion, and said he was going home by the next mail steamer. In the course of conversation it transpired that he meant to travel first class. I mentioned that from motives of economy I intended to travel second class and by an intermediate boat. When I embarked on the *Gaul* I was astonished to find Captain B. was also on board, and that he, too, was travelling second class. He explained

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that a desire for my society had caused him to cancel his first-class ticket for the mail boat and take a second-class berth in the inferior intermediate boat. Like Brer Fox, I "lay low."

We had not been long on the voyage before Captain B. endeavoured to borrow money from me. Needless to say, I refused to lend. This unfeeling conduct filled him with the greatest indignation. He unmistakably implied that it was with the view of making me his banker that he had demeaned himself so far as to accompany me. Seven months afterwards, when embarking on the steamer train at Waterloo Station, I noticed a man who had been a fellow-passenger on the *Gaul*, and who was now, like myself, returning to South Africa. This man appeared to be perturbed; he kept glancing expectantly along the platform. As the moment of departure drew near he became more and more uneasy. I asked him what was the matter, and he replied that B. had faithfully promised to meet him, bid farewell, and refund ten pounds which he had borrowed on the voyage. But the train glided away, with the head of my friend protruding from a carriage window, his eyes still vainly searching the platform.

CHAPTER XIV

Nqamakwe and its climate—Lightning—The liquor evil—Magistrates as detectives—Results of opposing the liquor traffic—Enormous profits—The last lion—Removal of the lepers—Emjanyana Leper Asylum—The Glen Grey Act—The Rinderpest—Spread of the infection—Bile inoculation—"The Prayer of the Cattle"—Opposition to inoculation—Soga's breakdown—Bile culture—The culture camp—A dangerous situation—Killing a black bull—The crisis—Revulsion of feeling—I disobey instructions of Government.

THE climate of Nqamakwe was magnificent. Only one of its features could be objected to; this was the wind which occasionally in winter swept down from the snow-covered Drakensberg and smote the greenery of my garden to blackness. I never saw a sign of frost in the vicinity of the Residency, although the lower part of the ridge used often to be white, as though snow had fallen, on winter mornings. The thunderstorms in summer were terrible; being caught by one in the open was an appalling experience. There were many fatalities from lightning. A large gum-tree just below the

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Residency was smitten one night ; cattle, sheep, and goats were often killed. Occasionally human beings were the victims. I remember one gruesome case. It was that of a Native woman who was walking along a footpath, carrying a basket of corn on her head. The lightning struck the basket and evidently split up, for it tore wide strips of skin from the unfortunate woman and set her clothing on fire. She lingered in agony for several days.

It is curious what an attraction the Native hut appears to have for lightning. I have known of many cases in which such huts were struck. This circumstance probably accounts for the important position held by the "lightning doctor" among the Natives who still adhere to their tribal customs. These persons insert magical pegs in the ground around a hut, which is thus supposed to be protected from the wrath of the spirits of the sky. The following curious incident is well vouched for as having occurred in the vicinity of Umtata a few years ago. Two "lightning doctors" met at a village where they had been employed to insert protecting pegs around two respective huts. A thunderstorm rolled up, and the rival experts in

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electricity began practising incantations and defying each other, boasting, the time, of their power over the elements. A lightning-stroke fell and slew one of the boasters. Naturally, the fortune of the survivor at once became assured.

I found the liquor evil nearly as great at Nqamakwe as it had been at Mount Frere, and on the whole more difficult to deal with. The western boundary of the district ran with that of the Colony proper, and on the Colonial side there were no restrictions whatever upon the sale of strong drink to Natives. Consequently, smuggling went on continuously. Moreover, the district was large and irregular as to contour, and the magistrates of adjoining areas apparently did not care to exert themselves to put the traffic down. I occasionally had to visit on duty a seat of magistracy less than a day's journey away. I used to put up at the only hotel, and on every such occasion noticed a more or less constant stream of Natives entering the bar, from there carrying liquor away. A policeman was usually standing by, but he took no notice of these open and flagrant infractions of the law. The magistrate once came to call on me. When

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he was taking his departure I accompanied him for a short distance, purposely directing his steps past the canteen. I then pointed out what was going on, and asked him how on earth he could permit such a thing. He just shrugged his shoulders and remarked that he was not a detective.

Well, I can only say that under the imperfect system existing in respect of the administration of justice at all except the larger stations, no magistrate can afford not to be a detective o' sorts. I do not mean that he should disguise himself *à la* Sherlock Holmes—although I have had to do something of the sort recently, and the result was the acquittal of two innocent men who were charged with a serious crime and who otherwise undoubtedly would have been convicted; but my experience has shown that if a magistrate does not keep a watchful personal eye on what is taking place around him, the police under his control will not alone be apt to neglect their duty, but will occasionally wink at, and even bring about, serious miscarriages of justice. If, on the other hand, a magistrate is known to have a searchlight eye that makes itself acquainted with dark corners, his subordinates will be

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both alert and careful. I would, however, emphasize this: that I in no way allude to the larger centres, where the officer in charge of the police force is usually zealous and efficient.

The liquor traffic is a terrible evil in the Native Territories, but so immense are the profits made from its furtherance that any magistrate who takes the foul thing by the throat is faced by a powerful combination which, in a district containing but few Europeans, can make itself felt in various unpleasant ways. One result to me was serious pecuniary loss: when about to leave Nqamakwe after a residence of about four years, not a single trader of the district attended the auction sale of my effects.

I must candidly confess, moreover, that my efforts towards suppressing the liquor traffic did no lasting good. I have reason to believe that after I left any little improvement I may have succeeded in effecting was soon undone. Some little time ago a well-known missionary wrote to tell me that Nqamakwe was then believed to be "the most drunken district in the Territories."

To give an illustration of how great the profits of the liquor traffic with Natives are, I will relate what happened in the vicinity of

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Komgha, a Colonial district adjoining Ngamakwe as well as the neighbouring magisterial area of Butterworth. There was a canteen about five miles from the Kei River, on the Colonial side. The Natives used to cross the river, obtain liquor at this canteen, and return with it into Kaffirland. The river valley was so deep and so rugged on the Kaffirland side that the Territorial Police had great difficulty in intercepting the smugglers. The Natives could cross the boundary practically anywhere except when the river was in flood; they used to hide among the rocks and in the scrub until night fell, and then steal home in the darkness.

The magistrate of Komgha, who had served in the Native Territories, and thus knew how great the evil was, gave us every possible assistance by keeping a police patrol in the open country between the canteen and the river. By this means a number of convoys were intercepted, and thus incalculable good was done. But the canteen-keeper, finding his profits cut down, purchased all the land over which the police patrolled, and threatened to prosecute the latter as trespassers if they again entered it.

In the summer of 1896 we hired an ox-

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wagon and trekked down to the seaside, near the mouth of the Kobonqaba River, which I had visited twenty-eight years previously. Here a number of officials had caused huts to be erected for use, in turn, by the joint owners. When unoccupied, the huts were placed under the charge of a headman of a kraal a few miles distant. The journey occupied four days, most of the course leading through most enchanting scenery. The whole of the Kaffirland coast is beautiful; there is not, I think, any other South African area of a like extent which contains so much truly delightful landscape. The surface of the country is much broken and every valley and hollow is full of rich forest. The soil is fertile and rain seldom fails.

Our holiday of three weeks was, to a considerable extent, spoilt by reptiles. We arrived at our destination after dark, and while engaged in carrying bedding into the largest hut, for the accommodation of the tired children, we found that the building was already tenanted by a large and fierce snake—a puff-adder. As the hut already contained some rough and heavy furniture, we had considerable difficulty in dispatching the creature. While in camp, we never spent a single day without killing one or more

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snakes. The surrounding vegetation was very rank, and my children were small; I lived in constant dread of their being bitten. A leopard used to prowl about the camp at night; but this we did not mind.

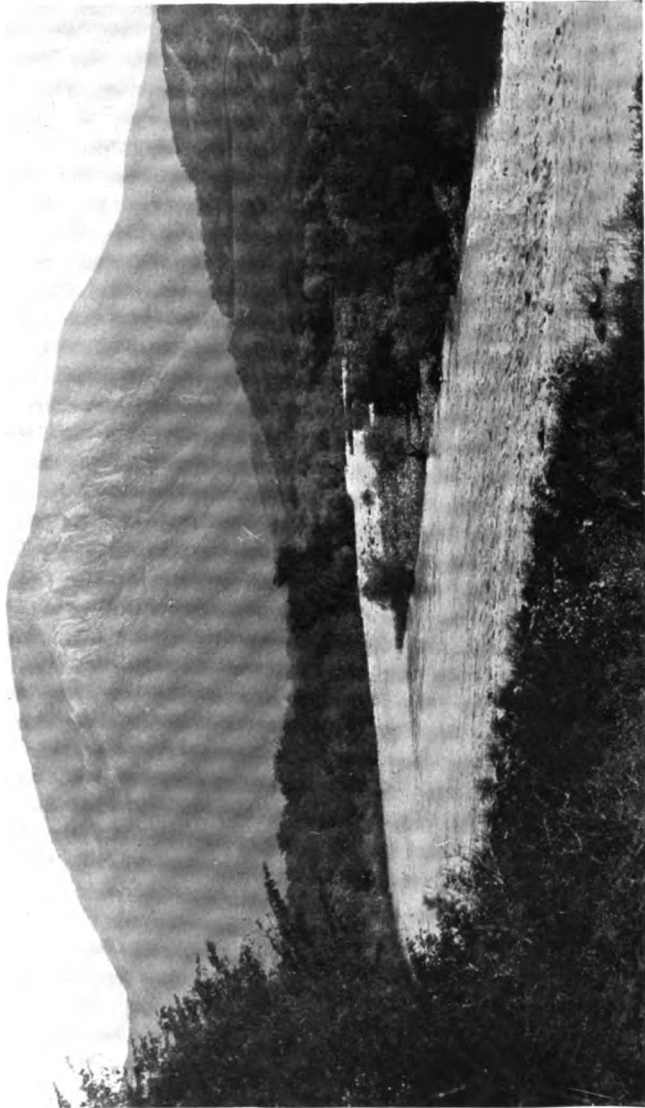
However, the fishing was good and the bathing in the lagoon at the river mouth delightful. To reach the lagoon one had to cross a narrow strip of forest; then one reached an area quite without vegetation and carpeted with clean, almost snow-white sand. Here the children could play with complete safety, and bathe, when they listed, in a shallow lakelet of crystal-clear water.

On the eastern side of the river mouth a rocky promontory jutted out, and from here one could spend delightful hours, fishing in the deeper chasms or watching

“the crested rollers lead
The vanguard of the tide.”

Not very far from the site of our camp is the mouth of the Gxara River. This, lying in what was once the territory of Kreli, the celebrated Gcaleka chief, brings to mind the great “cattle-killing,” that tragic blunder of a little more than half a century ago. In 1857

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THE GXARA RIVER, CLOSE TO ITS MOUTH.

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one Umhlakaza, a councillor of the Gcaleka chief, lifted his voice in prophecy. He announced that if the Natives killed all their cattle and destroyed all their food, the dead would rise and the White Man would be driven into the sea. Not alone dead men were to come to life, but countless herds of cattle were to emerge from the depths of the sea and from the caverns of the earth. The prophet's niece, one Nonqausa, was probably a ventriloquist, for she used to take people to a certain cave and also to wolf- and ant-bear-holes, and there simulate the lowing of the cattle who, she said, were waiting impatiently for the day of their release.

The people became demented; over large areas every head of cattle was slaughtered; every atom of food destroyed. A day was fixed for the great miracle, when, among other wonders and portents, the earth was to be wrapped in darkness and a whirlwind was to sweep all white men as well as all unbelievers into the sea. Old women decked themselves in trinkets, expecting to meet their long-dead husbands. The night was spent by all in a hushed ecstasy of anticipation.

But the day dawned, the sun arose, passed

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the zenith and sank once more; no miracle happened. After the manner of his kind, the prophet had an excuse ready, so faith revived for a few days. But there was an absolute dearth of food, and the people soon began to die; within a few weeks upwards of seventy thousand perished. Among these were many of the chiefs and councillors, for hunger is no respecter of persons, and gentle suffered with simple.

The seashore at the mouth of the Gxara River was the scene of Umhlakaza's alleged vision. His first story was to the effect that he had seen and conversed with people who had come out of the sea, and who said they were "Russians" (this happened shortly after the Crimean War), who intended to wage undying war against the English. These people were black; in fact Umhlakaza said that he recognized a long-dead brother of his among them. There is no doubt that at this time the Gcalekas intended declaring war upon the Colony. They were fully persuaded that the Russians not alone were black like themselves, but were coming in ships to help them. For months, about a year before the cattle-killing, look-outs used to be posted on the higher hills to signal the arrival of the Russian ships.

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One locality in the district of Nqamakwe had a special interest; it was on the watershed between the Tsomo and Tyinira Rivers. Here the last lion south of the Orange River was killed. The event took place either in 1865 or 1866. The lion, a solitary old marauder, used to wander up and down the Tsomo Valley, taking toll of cattle and occasionally killing a herd boy. The people were without guns, so for a long time he went unpunished. One day, however, he was located in a patch of scrub, and a trader who had a rifle happened to be in the vicinity. All the Natives within hailing distance turned out with spears and dogs, and the brute was dispatched without much difficulty. Just previously, the only lion surviving in the Cape Colony was shot at the Windvogel Berg, at the foot of which the town of Cathcart stands to-day.

A very curious thing happened at the Tsomo Residency while I was at Nqamakwe. The magistrate of Tsomo owned a collie dog. This animal took to worrying sheep, of which the surrounding Natives owned a considerable number. One morning the warcry pealed forth, and several hundred Natives, armed with spears, rushed the Residency. The dog took

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refuge in the magistrate's bedroom, but the infuriated Natives followed and there dispatched it. They then retired without doing further damage. I was sent to Tsomo to investigate the matter and to punish the perpetrators of the outrage.

One heart-breaking business which I had to undertake was the removal of lepers, of which the district contained about seventy, to the Emjanyana Asylum. In the first instance I had to ride all over the district, accompanied by the District Surgeon, for I had to personally investigate each individual case. In so doing I visited some most remote and God-forgotten spots, occasionally penetrating deep gorges with precipitous sides, which could only be traversed on foot. Eventually the unhappy victims, some of them mere children, had to be torn from their homes and sent into permanent banishment. I remember the case of one poor little girl. She was about eight years of age and was in an advanced stage of the disease. I asked her name for the purpose of filling in the clinical record of the case. To my astonishment it was given as "Umkalodes," or "Spouse of Rhodes." This was an instance of the habit the Natives have of

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making use of the surnames of well-known people in designating their children.

I ascertained some curious circumstances in respect of leprosy, and was struck by the similarity they bore to certain facts revealed by the Indian Leprosy Commission, the report of which I had just perused. For instance, there was the case of a man who had three wives, each of whom bore a family. One wife contracted the disease; so did all her children. But none of the other children at the kraal became infected, although they had for a long time been in the closest contact with those in whom the disease was fully developed. In another case a lad in an otherwise perfectly clean family became a leper. I was enabled to trace his infection to a leprous child who, six years previously, had spent a few days at the kraal. It seemed quite clear that some individuals contracted the disease very easily, whereas others were practically immune.

In 1898 I volunteered to take charge of the Emjanyana Leper Asylum for a time. I was anxious to see how the smitten creatures were treated and how they bore their hard lot. Emjanyana, which is in the district of Engcobo,

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is a lovely spot. It lies at the foot of a lofty ridge, from which rolling grassy downs slope down to the Bashee Valley. The people were well treated, and were allowed as much liberty as was consistent with security against escape. But they had no interest in life, and were consequently discontented. This, of course, was inevitable. But the impression I gathered was that they were less miserable than Europeans would have been under similar circumstances. I embodied my experiences in dealing with these hapless victims of the apparently purposeless animosity of Fate in a story entitled "The Lepers," which appeared in *Scribner's Magazine*. It was splendidly illustrated by Mr. F. C. Yohn.

Nqamakwe was one of the first districts brought under the provisions of the Glen Grey Act. This measure was also applied to a number of contiguous areas. Each district had its own Council. These Councils elected delegates; the latter, collectively, formed a General Council, which sat twice a year at Butterworth. The General Council had taxing powers, and voted the revenues resulting from the exercise of these to the maintenance of roads, the formation of wattle plantations to take the place of the denuded forests, the establishment of industrial institu-

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tions, and the furtherance of various public works. Some branches of administration were managed directly by the General Council. In others, sums were voted to the various District Councils, and by them administered. It was, in fact, the system adopted under the recent Act of Union, in miniature. The magistrates of the districts in which the system was in force were chairmen of the respective District Councils, and also had seats in the General Council. But in the latter body, although they could speak, they had no votes.

The system worked well. The speeches—especially those of the Native members—were characterized by sound common sense, careful reasoning, and, on occasion, by considerable eloquence. The unspoiled Native is a born orator: it was often an intellectual treat to listen to the debates. The dignity, the courtesy, and the sense of responsibility evinced at these sessions might have compared favourably with those of any other public assembly, in South Africa.

In 1897 that terrible scourge, the rinderpest, swept down from the north. We knew it was coming, and to a certain extent discounted its consequences. We read appalling accounts of its ravages: of how the wild buffaloes were

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found dead in heaps upon its track ; of how enormous areas had been utterly denuded of horned stock throughout South-Eastern Africa. In the early part of the year the pest had reached Herschel, and was withering up the herds of the Basuto. We knew that the smiting of the scourge was inevitable, but expected to have warning of its nearer approach. When the pestilence broke out, its advent was like a bolt from the blue. It suddenly appeared in the middle of the district, and we were never able to trace the source of the infection.

Early in June a report reached us to the effect that cattle were dying suddenly from an unknown disease at the kraal of a man named 'Mtoto, near a place called Xilinx, about twelve miles from the Residency. I at once requisitioned the services of a veterinary surgeon, at the same time drawing a cordon around the infected spot. Within a few days the veterinary surgeon arrived. He happened to be Jotello Soga, son of my old friend Tiyo Soga. I accompanied him to Xilinx, and he at once pronounced the disease to be the dreaded rinderpest.

Immediately the infection began to spread, its first advance being along two lines almost at right angles to each other, each line being that

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of an alternately prevailing wind. The district was rich in cattle: it probably contained about eighty thousand head. The excitement among the people became acute. The Native loves his cattle as he loves nothing else, and a preposterous rumour gained ground to the effect that the Government had introduced the disease for the purpose of impoverishing the people and thus forcing them to go out and work at the mines. From various secret sources of information I learnt that the situation was growing distinctly dangerous, so I at once sent my wife and family over the border into the Colony, and requisitioned a hundred Martini rifles and a large supply of ammunition. These I stored at the Residency.

Now arose the enormously important question: what was the best course to follow? Dr. Koch's great discovery as to the preventive effect of inoculation with the bile of infected animals had hardly as yet been tested. Experiments with bile had been made in the district of Herschel, but the results were indeterminate. Soga had gained experience of the inoculation process at Herschel, but had left there before any convincing results had eventuated. But neglect spelt certain ruin, so I proposed to Government that the inoculation method should be introduced at

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Nqamakwe. The step was sanctioned, but under most stringent conditions to the effect that the people were only to be "advised" to adopt it, and that no pressure whatever was to be exercised. These conditions were several times repeated in the most emphatic terms.

I called a mass meeting of the people and explained the situation to them. I told them of the experiences of other tribes; I explained that if nothing were done all their cattle would surely die; that, on the other hand, inoculation would most probably save at all events a few of them. Some of the people were sullen; some wildly excited; all were in the deepest distress. The terror and indignation induced by the suspicion which still haunted their minds seemed to render them incapable of reasonable thought.

After a long debate, from the close of which I was requested to retire, the great majority of the people remained opposed to taking my advice. However, one man of influence—his name was Henry Shosha, and it deserves to be placed on public record—stood up and said that he was prepared to consent to his cattle being inoculated. A few others followed suit. So next morning I went out to the kraal of one Baleni, whose herd of beautiful cattle had been attacked, and bought

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some of his sick animals. These I caused to be shot at once, and then I filled several large jars with bile from their immensely distended gall-bladders. Post-haste I rode to Shosha's village, accompanied by Soga, and there superintended the inoculation of some hundreds of animals. Immediately several men from other parts of the district, influenced by Shosha's example, grudgingly consented to having their cattle inoculated as well. It was, in such cases, highly necessary to have the bile pumped in at once, as the owners were apt to change their minds. This, as a matter of fact, happened in several instances.

The weather turned bitterly cold ; snow fell in all the high-lying parts of the district. The cattle died like flies in early winter. It was a heart-breaking situation ; the misery of the people was a thing terrible to contemplate. I spent all my time riding about the district. In season and out of season I preached the gospel of bile. At every principal kraal I emphasized my belief that inoculation or ruin were the alternatives. Like Satan in the Book of Job, I went to and fro in the earth and up and down in it. In fact, I almost lived in the saddle, never heeding where I slept or what I ate.

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One midnight in early July, when lying in a half-dismantled hut on the Lunda Divide, with the snow swirling down on my fire through the broken roof, I wrote the following verses, using my pack-saddle as a desk. The poem was afterwards illustrated by G. Denholm Armour, and given the place of honour in the *Pall Mall Magazine*:—

THE PRAYER OF THE CATTLE SMITTEN WITH RINDERPEST.

O Lord of Heaven, throned on high,
Above the clouds, above the sun,
Look downward with all-seeing eye—
Glance hither, our dismay upon.
Shed from Thy seat of boundless power
Regard on this, our passion-hour.

For, think: but yesterday the wold
Was starred with happy, mild-eyed kine;
Fair oxen through bright pastures strolled
(Dread Lord, Thou saidest we were Thine);
The strong bulls gendered in their heat,
Commanded from Thy Mercy Seat.

But, Lord of pity, Lord most just,
Thy biting wrath to-day hath smitten
Our helpless host; prone in the dust
We lie. Lord God, Thy word stands written—
That Word of ruth Thy strong voice hurled,
Which, like a mantle, wrapped the world.

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We pray not to Jehovah fierce,
Whose altars reeked with guiltless blood ;
No pity could His hard heart pierce
Who, ruthless, 'whelmed the world in flood,—
To whose keen nostrils now arise
The steams of this sad sacrifice.

But Thou, the Christ who, 'neath a load
Of sin and sorrow bent Thy neck,
Who bore on Calvary's steep road
The Cross that stemm'd creation's wreck—
Though men who wear Thy badge deny
Thy Name, upon that Name we cry.

Of sparrows, Lord, Thou tak'st the tale ;
O, many sparrows' worth are we.
Stem Thou the tide of this travail
Which 'whelms us like a burning sea,
Which makes our breath a fire to slay
Our fellows, Lord, Thy strong wrath stay.

Men crucified Thee; men to-day
Defile Thy all-embracing Church.
We know not sin; our humble way
Leads not e'en to Thy Temple's porch.
We are as those Thy kind Hand raised,
Thy poor, that hence Thy Name have praised.

Ours is the meekness that endures ;
Our patience, like a steadfast tree,
Stands in the torrent-pain that pours
And sweeps all else to some dark sea.
The patient bovine race unblest
Is earth's sad, dumb, pathetic guest.

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Sue for us now, Lord Christ, mild Son
Of yon dread Father throned apart.
Sue for us now, O pitying One,
Till Thy sweet pity rend His heart.
Sue for us, Christ, compassionate,
Melt with Thy tears the eyes of Fate.

The hour is late, our sun sinks low
Behind a storm-red western cloud;
Though Death be swift, his steps seem slow;
Pain wraps us in a burning shroud,
Plead for us, O compassionate—
Plead for us, Christ—the hour is late.

I should, perhaps, mention that the fourth verse of the foregoing did not appear. Lord Frederick Hamilton, the editor of the magazine, gave it anxious consideration, but came to the conclusion that some of his readers might object to it.

In the meantime the disease was spreading with appalling rapidity; fortunately, however, so far only along the two wind-courses leading from the original infection centre. But it soon became abundantly clear that the bile treatment was highly beneficial, for the murrain swept on like a veld fire, destroying the uninoculated herds, leaving the inoculated ones unscathed, or, if touched at all, only very slightly. Then an immense revulsion of feeling set in; about two-thirds of the cattle-owners of the district hurried

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to the Residency, clamouring to have their herds treated. The rest, however, remained recalcitrant, and developed a very dangerous temper.

Soga was of incalculable use to me in the early stages of the trouble. He worked in a most self-sacrificing manner, teaching me and a small but devoted band of helpers all that was then to be learnt about bile cultivation and inoculation. But after a time his mind seemed to give way under the strain. He took to drink and began obstructing the work. When I took him to task he threatened to shoot himself; on one occasion I actually stopped him from putting his threat into execution—just in the nick of time. Subsequently he took to wandering about among the kraals, raking up old feuds and talking to the people about war. I put a stop to this, and he sent a telegram to the Secretary for Native Affairs saying that I was grossly mismanaging things and that the district was being ruined. With the concurrence of the Chief Magistrate at Umtata, I sent him over the border into the Colony.

When the agony was at its height, Government, knowing how serious was the condition of things, sent Major Elliot, the Chief Magistrate, down to see how matters were being dealt with. The Major was satisfied with what he saw, and accord-

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ingly sent a telegram to Cape Town, eulogizing my work in the highest terms. After fully explaining matters I left the Major at the Residency and resumed my patrolling. But he only stayed for two days, for he was convinced that the situation was as much in hand as circumstances permitted.

The difficulty now was to procure sufficient bile for inoculation purposes. I could hardly go on purchasing sick cattle, more especially as the owners, with a view to recouping themselves for their losses, began asking enormous prices. So I made a levy of 10 per cent. on the herds of those who had adopted my suggestions. A Culture Camp was formed in the middle of the extensive Residency Reserve, about a mile from the house. Here the unlucky animals which had been selected for sacrifice for the good of the majority were infected with the disease, and, as soon as the latter had reached a certain stage, were shot. Thus we soon had a plentiful supply of bile. I remember one old man bringing a horse to the Culture Camp. He said he had nine head of cattle, and as he did not wish to sacrifice any of them, wished to have the horse infected.

Now, once more, the danger of trouble among the people became acute. The recal-

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citrant third, who mainly inhabited that extremely rugged country surrounding the junction of the Kei and Tsomo Rivers, having lost nearly all their cattle, became desperate. Their obstinacy, when they realized that they were ruined, turned to black rage; there was a sinister likelihood of their sounding the warcry and falling on those whose stock had been saved. Each morning, after rising, I would find a number of men sitting in my yard, with big lumps of beef carried carefully at the ends of long sticks. This was the flesh of cattle that had died of rinderpest at kraals where inoculation had been refused, and which had been flung by the desperate owners into kraals where inoculation had been adopted, in the malicious hope of communicating the disease. But I assured the people there was no cause for alarm; that their cattle were perfectly safe from infection from any source whatsoever.

At length I received definite information that a certain influential headman, Vananda by name, had killed a black bull and given a feast at his kraal on the previous night. This was an event of ominous significance. I knew that the crisis had arrived; that the maintenance of peace hung on a hair. One injudicious act on my part, one

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brawl, a quarrel between two rival factions, might have kindled the flame of a terrible war. There was one and only one thing to be done: to remain passive and await developments. So all I did was to send for old Vananda and detain him at the Residency, and to unpack the rifles in my dismantled drawing-room. To realize the danger at this juncture one must endeavour to conceive the intense excitement—due to the suspicion that Government had introduced the disease—under which the people were labouring. This excitement was not confined to my own district, but was general throughout the territories. Under ordinary circumstances a brawl, or even a big fight between the dwellers of two locations, is a matter of not much moment. Any sensible magistrate will tell you that such often clears the air and allays discontent. But on occasions when the general mind of the Natives is deeply moved, even the most insignificant dispute may have terrible consequences. Probably most readers will remember how the fight which occurred at the beer-drink at 'Ncaicibi's kraal near Butterworth, in 1877, plunged the Cape Colony into five years of warfare. Had the Natives who adopted inoculation been attacked I would have had to defend them. This I was

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bound in honour to do. Then it would have been a case of "To your tents, O Israel," from the Kei River to Natal. Nobody knew—not even Government, for I felt that no good would come from making alarmist reports—how close we one day were to the brink of a volcano. I knew that so far as my own district was concerned, if a breach of the peace were unfortunately to occur, the obedient would make short work of the recalcitrant, so I lit my pipe and sat with Philosophy on the brink of Chaos.

The acute moment passed ; the opponents of inoculation, having lost practically all their cattle, sank into sullen apathy. There were, even at this time, some few deep valleys whose herds had been unaccountably spared. The owners of these herds now came humbly suing for help ; but it was too late. Not alone was I fairly certain that the infection was latent in such herds, and that consequently inoculation would now avail them but little, but bile was scarce, and I felt strongly that my first duty was towards those who had adopted my advice in the earlier stages of the trouble. So I hardened my heart and told the penitents that their contrition had come too late. Nevertheless, I deeply pitied them as they went sorrowfully away.

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I should here say that as soon as I had satisfied myself that inoculation was of at least some use, I decided to disobey the orders of Government : that is to say, I determined to use every available ounce of pressure towards making the people inoculate. I kept four horses under saddle, and rode continually from one part of the district to another, preaching, advising, threatening, and cajoling—doing everything, in fact, that might be calculated to bring over waverers. Just then I had but one object in life, namely, to save cattle. I felt that I was justified in acting as I did ; that if Government had possessed my knowledge no attempt would have been made to tie my hands. It is a most true truism that orders are often more honoured in the breach than the observance. Risks must often be taken at a crisis by “the man on the spot.”

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA



THE RESIDENCY, NGAMARWE, 1895.

CHAPTER XV

Psychology of the people—Jubilee Day—I damage 'Mzondo's nose—A pathetic incident—The madman—Shortage of syringes—The mis-sent parcel—'Njengèlè and Jamboet—Fulfilment of a prophecy—Looting bile—Xaba's obstinacy—A catastrophe—End of the agony—"We will send our ears in a basket"—My health breaks down—Departure for England.

THE psychology of the Natives under stress of their sharp trial afforded an interesting study. Fear, levity, desperation, and suspicion passed like waves over the febrile general mind. However, as experience in every direction showed indubitably that inoculation was proving an immense success, this dangerous mixture of explosive gases evaporated, leaving in its place a sense of deep gratitude for the efforts being made to avert disaster, and a trust which was complete and full of pathos. In those dark, dangerous days I learnt to love and respect the Fingo people, and they will always occupy a warm corner in my heart.

Only one who knows the intense affection

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a Native bears towards his cattle can realize how hard, how cruelly, these people were hit. In some of the locations not a single bovine animal was left. This was more especially the case in the high, exposed regions; in some of the warmer river-valleys about 4 per cent. of the uninoculated animals survived. Most of these were cattle naturally immune, for there were hardly any recoveries. Had the visitation come in summer, when the grass was tender and succulent, the mortality would probably not have been quite so great.

I shall never forget Queen Victoria's Jubilee Day. It had originally been intended to hold a great feast near the Residency in honour of the occasion, but the cattle plague put a stop to this. Jubilee Day fell in the early stages of the visitation; I had given orders the previous evening that a certain valley was to be kept clear of cattle, so as to endeavour to hold back the infection—if only for a few days, pending the ripening of the cultivated bile. Distrusting the appearance of things, I rode out towards the kraal of Headman 'Mzondo, who dwelt in the vicinity, and whom I had made responsible for the carrying out of the order. I found the valley full of

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cattle from the locations on each side: all were mixed up and grazing together in the newly-gleaned fields. Seldom have I felt so enraged as I then was. I rode at a gallop to the kraal of 'Mzondo, and there found a beer-drink in full swing. The headman came forward and began, in a conscience-stricken manner, to apologize for his neglect. My fury grew coldly intense; I edged round until I reached ground higher than that on which the culprit was standing; then I drove my fist, with all the force I could concentrate, straight against his nose. The blow seemed to lift him from the ground before he rolled down the hillside. Within a few minutes the cattle had been separated and run out of the valley on each side. But as the disease had already broken out among the cattle in one of the locations involved, a great deal of damage resulted from the mixing.

This unconventional act produced excellent results, for the rumour of 'Mzondo's swollen nose got abroad and thus the people came to realize that the disregarding of orders was apt to have painful consequences.

On another occasion when visiting a kraal I heard some peculiar murmuring going on in

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a hut. I entered, and there saw the head of the kraal fondling a young calf. He had his arms around its neck and was rubbing his face against its soft skin. "All the others are dead," he said, "but if I can only keep this little heifer alive she will again fill my kraal."

I went farther. In passing another group of huts I heard a yell. Looking round I saw a man, whom I recognized as one not quite right in his head, rushing towards me with uplifted club. To escape, I had to put my horse to a sharp canter. Some people ran after the lunatic, but he easily distanced them. My two policemen wanted to stop the frantic creature; but I knew that doing so would result in his being hurt, so I forbade them. For nearly three miles he kept up the pursuit, yelling horrible threats and abuse all the time. The man had got it into his demented brain that I was responsible for the dying of the cattle.

One of our greatest difficulties lay in the matter of keeping up the supply of syringes. Those sent to me by the Veterinary Department—the only kind available—were very brittle indeed. The weak spot was where the metal cup at the base of the needle fitted over the

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glass nozzle. The hide of an ox is thick and difficult to pierce, and it was almost impossible to keep the animal from struggling when it felt the puncture. Besides, neither I nor the other inoculators were as yet skilled at the work: consequently the number of syringe casualties was very heavy. I sent despairing telegrams in every direction begging for fresh supplies of these quite indispensable articles. But none were to be obtained in South Africa, for the rinderpest had by this time spread far and wide, and inoculation had definitely come to be recognized as the one and only means of bovine salvation. At length one dreadful day arrived when we had only three syringes left. There were gallons of bile ready, but bile only retains its effectiveness for a limited time. Those who had contributed cattle to the Culture Camp were clamouring to have their animals treated. What was I to do? The three syringes, judging by previous experience, would not last more than a few hours.

The post arrived. I rode over to the post office, having decided to wait until the bag had been opened—in the almost hopeless hope of some response having been made to one

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or other of my frantic appeals. I sat on the counter: from here I could see the contents of the mail-bag as they were spilt out on the floor. Joy! there lay a box of the well-known type—the kind of box in which syringes were always dispatched. I dived from the counter and seized the precious thing. Then I vaulted over the counter and fled, shouting to the postmaster that I would sign the necessary receipt on my return, as I was in a hurry to distribute the instruments to my impatient inoculators. In tearing at the cover to open it, the label caught my eye. The box was not addressed to me at all, but to the magistrate of a district nearly two hundred miles away. Some thrice-blessed duffer in the Cape Town General Post Office had made the magnificent mistake of putting the parcel in the wrong bag. It contained three dozen excellent syringes of an improved and less brittle type.

I never hesitated for an instant: fearful lest the postmaster might discover the mistake, I sprang into the saddle with the still unopened box in my hand and rode off at a gallop, signing to the inoculators to follow me. Conscience began to whisper complaints, but I took her by the throat and hurled her sense-

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less into the nearest ant-bear hole. The situation was saved—almost by a miracle.

My experiences included some striking situations. In the comparatively early days of the trouble I sent for two influential natives and got them to accompany me to the kraal of one Baleni, where the cattle, a noble herd, were all either dead or dying. These men belonged to a location which had, so far, refused to adopt inoculation: I wished to test the effect of an object-lesson on them. One of the men, 'Njengèlè ("The Giant"), was head-man of the location. He was not rich—except in the item of wives, of whom he possessed a large number; his herd of cattle numbered about thirty head. His companion, Jamboet, one of the richest men of the district, owned between three and four hundred. I pointed out the havoc that had been wrought, indicating the piteous spectacle afforded by the carcasses and suffering creatures strewn thickly around. I urged upon these men that they should endeavour to save their herds from a like fate. They went away and consulted together. When they returned 'Njengèlè said, "I do not believe in this bile cure: how can the bile of a sick beast cure the same kind

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of sickness? But I am a Government man, and therefore must obey the magistrate. I can see now that my cattle will die in any case, so you can do what you like with them." "And you, Jamboet?" I asked. Jamboet gave answer in a parable: "My father is dead; his father is dead; I will die some day; my cattle will not live for ever; but I will not permit you or any one else to kill them with bile. Faugh!" (Here he spat with disgust.) "Jamboet," I rejoined, "within a few weeks I will pass your kraal and see you skinning your last ox. And your sons, when they marry, will have to 'lobola' (pay dowry) in pigs."

Fearful lest 'Njengèlè might change his mind, I at once sent to his kraal and had his cattle inoculated. He saved every one—a somewhat unusual result, for we always allowed for a certain percentage of casualties. Exactly four weeks afterwards I called at his village in passing, and inspected his herd. Jamboet's kraal was situated lower down the valley, not quite two miles away. I knew that his cattle had been attacked and that a large number were dead. I asked 'Njengèlè as to the state of things at Jamboet's. The only reply he made was to pass the fingers of his right

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hand over his mouth with a twisting motion. The meaning of this gesture is "all is over." I rode down the Kotana Valley, making a slight detour so as to pass Jamboet's residence. Just at the back of the largest hut I saw four boys engaged in skinning an ox. Sitting close by was a man in an attitude suggestive of deep dejection; his head, with the corner of a blanket thrown over it, lay sideways on his bent knees. It was Jamboet. When he heard the sound of my horse's hoofs he glanced round. Then he hurriedly arose, entered a hut and pulled the wicker door close after him. As I drew nearer the boys desisted from their labour of skinning and looked up, but they did not speak. "Is this the last?" I asked, speaking in a low tone. The eldest of the boys nodded, silently. I rode on. My chance prophecy had come literally and appallingly true—a thing which seldom happens even in the case of reasoned prophecies. A wind moaned down the hillside. It was heavy with the nameless effluvium from hundreds of festering carcasses. It seemed as though—as the Natives say when war breaks out—"the land were dead."

Whenever the supply of bile from the Culture Camp ran short, as it occasionally did,

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I used to go out with a couple of policemen and a rifle and shoot sick cattle wherever I could find them, emptying the contents of the gall-bladders into large, canvas-covered jars which were hung, in padded bags, to the tree of a pack-saddle on a led horse. This was business I could not delegate to any one else: had I done so there would have been trouble.

It is strange how, in a time of severe stress, a man can become absorbed by a single idea. In those days I lived for bile alone; at night its sickly yellow coloured my dreams; it was to me more precious than gold. The Fiend could never have purchased the reversion of my soul for cash, but he lost several opportunities of acquiring it for a few gallons of bile.

On the whole my inoculating operations were extraordinarily successful. There was, in fact, only one bad catastrophe. A man named Xaba, father of one of my policemen, owned a fine herd numbering nearly two hundred head. At first he opposed inoculation, but eventually he came to me early one morning and said that if I would inoculate my own cattle in his presence he would allow his to be operated on as well. I had, of course, treated my own

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little herd of seven head at the beginning of the trouble, but my assurance to this effect did not satisfy Xaba. So to induce him to fall into line—although the bile used could just then be but ill afforded—I reinoculated my cows in his presence. “Now,” he said, “I am satisfied, and you may inoculate my cattle if you will give me your word as a man and as my magistrate that anything you do to your cattle in the future you will also do to mine.” I gave the promise, thus doing something I afterwards had bitter cause to regret. Some weeks afterwards the (as it proved, preposterous) idea got abroad that it might be a good thing to inoculate the bile-treated cattle with virulent blood. I always made a point of testing new ideas on my own cattle before applying them to those of the Natives. Accordingly, I pumped a syringe of blood drawn from an animal infected with rinderpest into each of my seven cows.

Next morning Xaba came to the Residency in a towering rage with me for having failed to treat his cattle also with virulent blood. The fact of his having so soon heard of what I had done showed how closely I was being watched. Xaba was violent in his demeanour

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and demanded energetically that I should hold to my promise. I tried to reason with him, but the man was almost beside himself and would not listen. In vain I urged upon him that I had only tried an experiment; in vain I begged him to await the result of what I had done, in the meantime allowing the fulfilment of my pledge to stand in abeyance. But it was a case of either doing what Xaba required—that is, keeping to the strict letter of my promise—or else locking him up, a thing I was averse to doing for several reasons. So I weakly gave in, and sent two inoculators to Xaba's kraal to treat his herd with infected blood. Two days passed. On the third morning at daybreak I was awakened by a messenger who came to report that Xaba's cattle were all dying. I at once sprang out of bed, and within a few minutes was galloping to Xaba's kraal, which was only about five miles away. There I saw a terrible sight. Scattered over the hillside, upon which the new-arisen sun was brightly shining, the unfortunate cattle lay, dead and dying. Not more than a dozen were able to stand. As I rode among the moaning creatures I felt like a murderer—but a very repentant one. I am not ashamed to say that my

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tears flowed freely. Xaba acted like a gentleman : he freely admitted that he and none other was to blame. I felt this disaster more than any other episode of the rinderpest visitation.

My cattle passed through the ordeal almost scatheless. This was undoubtedly due to their having been fortified by a double dose of bile. Thus, owing to some mysterious trick on the part of Fate, Xaba's two hundred head of cattle were sacrificed to save my seven ; for if Xaba had not unreasonably insisted on the second inoculation with bile, my little herd would undoubtedly have succumbed to the virulent blood.

It was not until October that the agony came to an end. By that time all uninoculated cattle, with the exception of perhaps sixty "immunes" which could not contract the disease, were dead. Over the surface of two-thirds of the district the carcasses lay thick : it was difficult to get out of sight of them or to avoid the pervading stench. It was but rarely one saw a vulture : the mortality was so general and so widespread that these loathsome but useful birds had flocked northward, to where the weather was warmer.

I was nearly dead too, for I broke down and became almost a wreck as soon as the

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strain slackened. I found it almost impossible to sleep. But we had saved over twenty thousand head of cattle. In the surrounding districts the magistrates had obeyed the orders of Government (in abstaining from pressing inoculation upon the people), with the result that practically all the cattle died. We were nearly starving, except in the matter of meat, for a cordon had been drawn between the Colony and the Territories, and no wagon was allowed to cross from either side. This restriction was kept up quite unnecessarily long after the disease had leaped over the Kei River and spread southward and westward. On the day the cordon was removed I had forty wagons with full spans of rinderpest-proof oxen waiting to cross the Kei, and there was not a single ox-drawn vehicle from any other district present. The wagons pushed through to King William's Town, and within a week or so returned laden with much-needed supplies—not alone for Nqamakwe, but for the surrounding districts.

Next ploughing season, after my people had worked up their own fields, they went forth into the surrounding districts, hiring out their plough-teams. By this means they made a

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great deal of money. My fame grew great in the land. I remember once sending a message to 'Mxamli's Location, requiring the people to attend at the office in connection with some administrative matter. I received the following reply: "We have no time to go and see you, for rain has fallen and we are busy cultivating. All you have to do is to let us know what the order is. We will obey it—even if it be that we are to send our ears in a basket."

My health did not improve. My power of resilience, my capacity for endurance of any description, seemed to have gone. An hour's work on the bench left me fatigued and depressed. My sleep diminished almost to vanishing-point; my nerves had become so worn down that any sudden noise made me jump. I felt as though I were being roasted—in patches. After a few days the cuticle covering such patches would disappear, leaving the surface raw. The doctor said I was suffering from hyperæsthesia—a somewhat rare disorder, but one as full of misery to the victim as its title is lavish of the alphabet. I was ordered to proceed incontinently to Europe for the purpose of consulting a specialist.

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This period of the rinderpest agony stands out as the most strenuous episode of a fairly strenuous life. It taught me a great deal about humanity: at such times men can take each other's measure pretty accurately. I had to call many to my assistance, and of these to discard a certain proportion as dishonest or incompetent. Others remained with me to the end; the furnace proved them to be pure gold. Among such several of the native headmen stand out saliently. I have never worked with men more faithful, more loyal, more capable, or more unselfish than some of those Fingo headmen who assisted me in coping with that terrible scourge which so suddenly and so mysteriously fell on the cattle—the people's dearest possession.

It was early in 1898 when I left Cape Town for England in the intermediate steamer *Gaul*. As bad luck would have it the vessel carried a full cargo of hides—those of cattle which had died of rinderpest. The heavy smell of these permeated everything. It seemed indeed as though I were never to get out of touch with the charnel horrors of the past months—as though their physical results were to follow me, like my shadow, to the ends of the earth.

CHAPTER XVI

Insomnia—Quest of quiet—Penzance—The Scilly Islands—Disappointment—Newlyn—Visiting studios—How to neutralize nocturnal noises—London—The Temple Church—Mentality of the Londoner—What the London clerk reads—Restricted reading—Matter for serious thought—The tipping evil—The flunkey—The Spanish-American War—Newspapers and public opinion—Sympathy with Spain—Ignorance of South Africa and its problems—The Tory M.P. and his plan of settlement—My landlady's suspicions—Saved by "the kerridge"—" 'E ought to be good lookin' at that"—The hydra of snobbery—My Irish cousin—Dublin—Horrible slums—Scenes of my childhood—Killarney—"Begor, that was althered a fortnight ago"—Return to South Africa.

IN London I put myself under the medical care of Dr. Charlton Bastian, who was celebrated both as a nerve and brain specialist and a biologist. I felt almost a complete wreck. Insomnia was my worst trouble; sleep seemed to have fled from me for ever. My condition was such that the slightest unusual noise at night seemed to strike on my brain like a sledge-hammer. Opiates had almost lost their effect. My medical

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adviser told me that my only chance of benefiting by his treatment lay in finding some place where my nights would be undisturbed.

Dr. Bastian will be remembered by those of the last generation who followed the developments of biological science, as one of the few (if not the only one) of the stalwarts who believed in the possibility of abiogenesis after publication of the results of Tyndall's well-known experiments conducted in Switzerland at various Alpine altitudes. He was good enough to discuss some of his theories with me. I noticed that he was much soured by the discourteous treatment he had received at the hands of his brother scientists. Now, however, the most recent researches into the matter of the origin of life seem to point to the conclusion that Dr. Bastian's views are, after all, probably right. But it is curious to note how Science occasionally borrows weapons from Theology's arsenal of intolerance.

In the meantime I had to find my necessary quiet corner. I consulted a map of the British Islands and made a list of the most remote and lonely-seeming spots. I thought of writing to the Trinity Brethren for permission to occupy a spare room in the lighthouse of the Casquettes. Eventually I decided upon the Scilly Islands;

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surely if quiet were to be found anywhere, it would be among those remote, Atlantic-swept rocks. I did not mind the sound of the wind or that of the sea ; these had never disturbed me. So I took a ticket for Penzance by the " Cornish-man " express.

Close to Penzance, at Newlyn, dwelt my old friend, Norman Garstin. We had lived together on the diamond fields in the early days, but had never met since—except once for a hurried hand-shake over the rail of a ship in the East London roadstead. He was now established as an artist, and was, in fact, the patriarch of the well-known Newlyn artists' colony, the members of which had selected this spot on the Cornish coast on account of its mild winter climate and its soft, dreamy atmosphere. The latter is said to act like an opaline filter to sunlight, and to neutralize all glare.

After spending a few days with the Garstins I took the boat for Tresco. As we approached the little pier I thought that at length I had found that which I had so diligently been seeking. Here—remote and fenced off from the turmoil of the troublous world—surely I would be in the very citadel of peace. The month was April ; the daffodils would be in bloom. Here

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I would spend a few languorous weeks, punctuating long slumber periods by desultory studies of bulb culture and meditations on the tragic fate of Sir Cloudesley Shovel and his fleet.

But once more I was doomed to disappointment. Amatory and argumentative cats, barking dogs, and cocks whose sense of the fitness of things was so weak that they crowed at short intervals all night long, made sleep impossible. So after a few days I returned to Newlyn and once more took up my abode with the Garstins.

It was but a few weeks before "sending-in day"; the pictures intended for the Royal Academy Exhibition were on their respective easels, receiving finishing touches. Through Garstin I was made free of the local artists' guild—and a most delightful guild it was. So far as I could judge, jealousy between the different painters did not exist. I could not help reflecting that had so many musicians been placed in such close proximity to each other, there would be a different tale to tell. Musicians, however charming individually, are not gregarious outside the choir.

I dined with Mr. Stanhope Forbes and his gifted wife in their quaint dwelling on the windy hill overlooking Newlyn. From outside it sug-

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gested a clay fortress built by Ancient Britons. Inside, however, it was very civilized indeed. I wandered from studio to studio, drinking much weak but excellent tea, and criticizing the pictures being painted, from the standpoint of an outer barbarian. This impertinence of mine was taken in astonishingly good part. In one instance I was, strangely enough, the occasion of an alteration being made in a picture. The latter was "The Awakening," by Mr. T. C. Gotch, which was afterwards, I think, purchased by the trustees of the Chantrey Bequest. The lamp under the chair at the bedside in the picture was added at my suggestion.

All this would have been delightful to a degree were it not that the spectre of insomnia was always grinning at me. Eventually, in something like despair, I fled back to London, and there found, strangely enough, the quiet I was seeking. My sister, who lived in a Victoria Street flat, gave me a room which overlooked Ashley Gardens, and there I at length found utter stillness—stillness as complete as though I had been camped in the centre of the Great Karroo.

For the benefit of those who, like myself, are seriously disturbed by noises at night, I will describe a very simple device by means of which

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such noises may be rendered innocuous. One simply takes two loose blobs of cotton-wool, each about the size of a hazel-nut, soaks them in glycerine, and plugs one's ears with them. A little practice is necessary to determine the most suitable size and density of the blobs, as well as the proper manner of inserting them. Many highly strung persons find their lives made utterly miserable by nocturnal noises; personally, I have more than once temporarily broken down in health from this cause alone. The biographies of several artists and thinkers record bitter sufferings occasioned by noises which trouble not at all the healthy man whose nerves are normal. In my own relatively trivial case, since a friend, now, alas! dead, told me of the remedy I have described, it has been as though a darkening shadow—one which was fraught with very serious menace—has passed from my life.

During the three years previous to my visiting London for the first time, I had published a few books. These, although they never attracted the public to any great extent, were remarkably well received by the critics, and were the means of my obtaining introductions to many interesting people belonging to literary and artistic circles.

To me the most inspiring spot in London

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was the Temple Church. In its gracious stillness I used to take refuge from the roar of the Strand and Fleet Street, and, passing softly from one to another of the proud-visaged, recumbent figures on the floor, muse on the vanished ideals this shrine stood for. Here I would recall the extraordinary history of the Templars—so glorious in its morning and noon, so piteous when the stormy evening fell. The valour of these lofty-spirited warriors of the Cross, the agony of their extinction, and the hideous injustice which led to it—surely the perplexed mind of man has never had a harder task than to adjust this record to the concept of an omnipotent and omniscient Providence. Sometimes it seemed as though the fane were full of tongues whispering of the past; sometimes the gentle spirit of Goldsmith seemed to emerge from his tomb outside the groined doorway and remind me that even if it be decreed that injustice is to persist throughout Time to the very gates of Eternity as one of the principal influences moving the world, yet what Stevenson called “the ensign of man’s ineffectual goodness” is still held aloft in the van of the human host.

Although I had never previously lived in or even visited a great city, the intricacies of

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London never puzzled me. I think that years spent in desert wanderings develop a sense of direction which is effective in any environment. An hour's study of the map of that portion of London which includes, I take it, every street a stranger is likely to visit—that is to say, all lying between the river and Regent's Park, between Kensington and Farringdon Street—made me familiar with the main details. My sister had lived in London for thirty years; before I had been there a fortnight I used to show her short cuts from one place to another.

My experience of the rank and file of Londoners gave me the impression that life in a mammoth city does not develop the human intellect to such a pitch of effectiveness as life in the veld. The individuals of whom I had sufficient experience to enable me to judge, appeared to have made themselves familiar with a few grooves and, in fact, to have become highly specialized therein, but if one endeavoured to exercise them in the vast field of the ungrooved, they stumbled badly. It may be that the constant impact of crowding impressions dulls the perceptions. There can be no doubt that the ready-made and speciously argued opinions served up in the daily papers, dealing with every imagin-

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able subject, tend to get people out of the habit of thinking for themselves.

The average Londoner, so far as I had an opportunity of judging, appeared to read solely for amusement. The editor of one of the most important illustrated weeklies of the English-speaking world told me that year by year it was found necessary to lower the intellectual standard of his columns. I often travelled by the Underground Railway in carriages crowded with clerks. Each of the latter would usually be engaged in reading one or other of the (so-called) comic papers, price a halfpenny. What especially struck me was the intense absorption of the readers. Having noted the titles of a number of these publications I would invest sixpence in a sheaf of them. Later I would spend a dreary hour in studying the barren columns, with the object of discovering something of interest, something that my mind—which I take to be an average South African one—could feed upon and assimilate. But my efforts were in vain; all I ever found was a re-hash of stale, feeble, wishy-washy attempts at jests, mawkish sentiment, vulgar suggestiveness, and pictures most vilely drawn. The intemperate or unfaithful husband, the vixenish mother-in-law,

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and the highly adiposed chorus-girl formed the stock-in-trade—the trio upon which the dreary changes were rung. What (one may ask) ideals can a mind grasp that browses with satisfaction on garbage such as this, and on little if anything else outside the items of the mechanical round of business?

The old South African Boer, who only read his Bible, has often been derided for his ignorance and his prejudices. Yet, if a man's reading be restricted to one class of literature—using that term in a most comprehensive sense—I think few will question the superiority of Isaiah to *Sketchy Bits*, or of the Psalms, alleged to David, to *Comic Cuts*. If the young men I allude to read anything else, the case would not be so hopeless, but I am certain that in the vast majority of instances they did not. Engage any one of them in conversation and you would find this to be indubitably the case. I find, however, that I have forgotten the "Sporting Events." Racing, football, and cricket interest them—not for the sake of the game, but because they bet on the different matches.

It is this vast, unthinking, easily swayed mass that subjects British politics to those violent oscillations which prevent continuity of national

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policy or development. It is the crass materialism induced by the life of the majority of city dwellers—of whom nine-tenths of Britain's population is composed—that makes one almost despair of democracy and shudder at the thought of what may now be passing through a later gestation period in the womb of Time. Is there, one asks, any mental soil left in which a high ideal could take root? "Where there is no vision the people perish."

The tipping evil angered me at every turn. I am ashamed to confess that, not having sufficient courage to refrain from following a pernicious example, I once, after dining at a private house, was weak enough to disburse four half-crowns—one to each of the respective flunkies who handed me my overcoat, my hat, my gloves, and my stick. On one occasion my wife and I were invited to spend a week at a country house. We were on the point of accepting when a friend mentioned that at the end of the visit we would be expected to disburse about ten pounds in tips. Accordingly, we declined the invitation.

Of all the objectionable people I met in Europe I think that the British flunkey, with his greed, his cold contempt for everything not in accord-

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ance with the pattern approved by his weasel's soul, and his grotesque, mock-lordly, frigid insolence, is the worst. I infinitely preferred the society of some cheerful blackguards with whom I associated in Canning Town. The blackguard, at war with society as he is, draws upon and develops his self-reliance; the costermonger—whose very vulgarity is often made attractive by the wit with which it is salted—will often cheat you, but may immediately afterwards put himself out to do you a good turn. But the flunkey is a parasite, pure and simple. He is without—so far as I could judge by the specimens I had under observation—a single adequate redeeming quality. He is less than the ninth part of a man.

The war between the United States and Spain was being waged when I was in London. In this connection I noticed a very curious thing. Although the newspapers, with hardly a notable exception, declared themselves as on the American side, four people out of five that one met sympathized with Spain. Early, on the morning of the day when the news that Admiral Dewey had knocked Montojo's superannuated fleet into scrap-iron reached London, I happened to be at the office of one of the larger American magazines,

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There I heard the news of the engagement and its results. From this office I went to Victoria Station to say goodbye to some friends who were starting for France. Among the party were the American Ambassador and a distant connection of mine. I told the latter the news ; he expressed both astonishment and distress. He mentioned the matter to the Ambassador, who had not yet heard of it. Therefore my friend remained sceptical ; he was inclined to regard what I had told him as merely one of those lying rumours with which the air just then so often thrilled. But I knew my intelligence to be correct, and said so. About half a dozen men collected around me, and we drew to one side. One and all, they expressed themselves as strongly hopeful—either that the news might prove untrue or that the alleged crushing defeat of the Spaniards might turn out to be exaggerated. These men might have been taken as typical of the class one met at the ordinary West End club. I found that the same sentiments were held by the majority of men with whom I foregathered in the City.

I happened to meet on the evening of the same day the chief sub-editor of one of the more important London dailies. I had read, in that day's issue, a leader in the journal

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referred to which was strongly pro-American in tone, and as I was fairly familiar with this particular sub-editor's style, I attributed the leader to him. By that time the news of Montojo's disaster was public property. My acquaintance, next to whom I was sitting, expressed himself as being much grieved at what had taken place. I alluded to the leader I had read, saying that I was under the impression he had written it.

"Yes," he replied, "I did write it; but although we all pretend to wish success to America, we would much prefer Spain to win."

This divorce of expression and sentiment struck me as being very similar to that which existed at the time of the American War of Secession. Then, with the exception of the *Times*, the British Press was strongly on the side of the Federals, whereas it is a notorious fact that a heavy preponderance of British opinion was in favour of the Confederates. All this goes to show what a very unsafe guide the Press is, either as to the ethics of any given question or as to how such question is regarded by the public.

I found everywhere the most extraordinary ignorance of South Africa and its problems.

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The latter had not then reached the acute stage; nevertheless they were much under discussion. In the various conversations I listened to—more especially those which took place at clubs—a few utterly erroneous root-ideas were held to with passionate persistence. I remember once meeting a fairly prominent Conservative Member of Parliament at dinner. The subject of Majuba and the retrocession of the Transvaal was under discussion; also the question as to whether the Dutch of the Cape Colony would assist their kin of the northern states, in the event of the Majuba settlement being reversed. This legislator's remedy was a simple one: "If a single one of them goes into rebellion," he said, "we must confiscate the land of every damned Dutchman in the Cape Colony."

So far I had not joined in the conversation, but I now diffidently suggested that there might be legal difficulties in the way of such a drastic proceeding. I also reminded him that the Cities of the Plain, in spite of their heavy iniquities, would have been spared had it been possible to discover even ten righteous men therein. This made him purple with rage; he insisted that it could be done and

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should be done. With a look of unmistakable meaning at me he added—

“Ay, and the land of any damned rebellious Briton as well !”

My landlady—excellent woman that she was—proved an interesting study. At first I shocked her unspeakably by asking questions about the other lodgers in the house. These were human creatures sheltered by the same roof-tree that sheltered me; therefore they were interesting; it did not seem wildly unnatural that I should want to know something about them. But Mrs. Wand was filled with suspicion; I really think she suspected me of designs on their baggage. Her Pimlico soul could not grasp the ideas I attempted to explain. It was evident she was on the point of giving us notice to quit; quite possibly she may have communicated her fears to the police. However, something fortunately happened which restored her confidence. One auspicious day a lady called on my wife “in her own kerridge,” and we were at once rehabilitated; no longer were we regarded as shady characters.

Mrs. Wand thenceforth, with gentleness and a certain measure of tact, tried to inculcate upon our benighted South African understand-

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ings what were the only safe principles of social life (as lived in Pimlico). First and foremost came the maxim that in London you must never, *never* try to know anything about anybody living in the same street with you. Another was to the effect that you were to regard every one to whom you had not been formally introduced by some responsible person as either a cut-throat or a swindler.

But Mrs. Wand was, in essentials, a paragon among landladies; it would have been an irreparable misfortune had she turned us out. Of this, I am convinced, we had a narrow escape; it was only that heaven-sent "kerridge" that saved us. Before that episode she was unable to size us up at all; we fitted into none of her categories. Now, however, we were undoubtedly respectable, albeit eccentric. I remember one day sitting with an open hunting-knife in my hand; I had purchased this as a present for a friend. Mrs. Wand, who happened to come into the room, glanced fearfully at the weapon. After putting down the tray she was carrying, she said, in an awed voice—

"You look as though you could use that, sir."

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I do not know whether this was meant as a compliment or not, but I took it as such.

Mrs. Wand made, quite unconsciously, one very amusing remark. I should first explain that her house was small, and was situated in a rather obscure street, but that nevertheless on several occasions people with handles to their names had evidently lodged in her comfortable establishment. Business circulars addressed to these superior persons used sometimes to arrive. Such, instead of being re-posted the same day, as was done in the case of missives addressed to humbler ex-lodgers, would be left for several days on the hall table.

I had been for a short visit to Mr. Rudyard Kipling at Rottingdean, and had brought back a bunch of roses from his garden. Seeing that Mrs. Wand was so proud of her celebrities, I thought I would let her know that I, too, knew a celebrity, so when she came to set the breakfast-table next morning I pointed to the flowers and said—

“There, Mrs. Wand, you would never guess where these roses came from; they are from the garden of the great Mr. Kipling.”

“Mr. Kipling; 'oo's 'e?”

“Good gracious!” I exclaimed, “surely you

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know who Mr. Kipling is. Why, his autograph is worth a guinea ! ”

Mrs. Wand left the room without replying. She returned a few minutes later, with a look of scepticism on her face and, as she put down the toast-rack, remarked—

“ Well, 'e ought to be good lookin' at that.”

I will relate one trivial incident ; it seems to be of interest as throwing a sidelight on City manners. I lunched one day at one of the big military clubs—I forget which it was, but it stood in Pall Mall—with a certain General under whom I had served in one of the South African wars. I was dressed in a tweed cycling suit ; this was fairly new, but my hat had certainly seen better days. However, on the whole my sumptuary condition was quite equal to that of my host ; undoubtedly it compared favourably with that of many of the men in whose company I was entertained.

Next morning I had occasion to go to the City. Passing the counting-house of an acquaintance, I remembered that this man had given me a pressing invitation to call on him for the purpose of being entertained at lunch at Sweeting's, on any day convenient to myself.

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Here, I thought, was an excellent opportunity. I was dressed in the clothes I had worn on the previous day.

I sent in my card and was at once admitted. When I stated the object of my visit, my acquaintance seemed somewhat embarrassed. He asked me if I would have any objection to lunching elsewhere than at Sweeting's. I replied that I had no choice whatever in the matter, but would like to know what the suddenly discovered objection to Sweeting's was. He then told me, with many apologies, that it was not usual for men in his position, or for their guests, to lunch at Sweeting's unless clad in a frock-coat and top-hat, and that he would feel awkward if seen lunching with me in my cycling garb. It did seem strange that garb considered suitable for one of the first clubs in London should not be regarded as good enough for a City pot-house. It was the spirit of Pimlico, as expressed by Mrs. Wand, animating the City; it was the hydra of snobbery lifting one head in the West End lodging-house and another in the East End counting-house.

We went to Ireland to see some relatives and to revisit the scenes of my childhood. In

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Dublin, on the quays, I made some valuable finds in the matter of old books relating to South Africa. I much regret not having worked this profitable lode more thoroughly. When I revisited Dublin some years after, I did not find a single South African book worth securing. I subsequently heard that agents of London collectors had forestalled me, with considerable profit, a few months before.

I visited the house of my birth in Middle Gardiner Street, and found that it, like its hapless neighbours, had been metamorphosed into tenements, the various floors being inhabited by different families which seemed to be steeped in poverty, vice, and misery. I went to see a relative, a retired Civil servant, who lived in one of the suburbs of the city. The month was June and the day was sultry, but I found my relative sitting before a blazing fire, on which a large kettle was singing. At his elbow was a table on which stood a bottle of whiskey, some lemons, a bowl of sugar, and a steaming bowl of punch. He arose with difficulty, for he was very gouty, and addressed me as follows:—

“Well, I’m damned glad to see you, glory be to God.”

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He was much distressed because I declined to join him in his carouse.

Dublin in parts was quite as dirty as it is proverbially supposed to be. In crossing the Liffey, on Carlisle Bridge, I literally had to hold my nose. I have heard that since the new drainage scheme has come into operation things have somewhat improved.* I inquired as to where the worst slums were to be found, and was directed to a locality up the river and on its northern bank. Here I saw the most debased specimens of humanity it has ever been my misfortune to look upon. The degraded remnants of the South African Bushmen were, by comparison, clean, wholesome, and comely. Half-naked women of degenerate physique rolled in filthy gutters, drinking porter from bottles or yelling obscenities. Almost wholly naked children, caked with dirt and occasionally showing signs of loathsome disease, crawled over the cobblestones in the sunshine. I gasped and fled from the horrid sight, and had the greatest difficulty in keeping from being violently ill. For the twentieth

* Since writing the above, I have revisited Dublin, and I found that an immense improvement in the condition of the city had taken place.

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time I wondered why people subscribed money for the purpose of sending missionaries to the foreign heathen, when they have domestic heathen festering in a lower Phlegethon-pit than I, who had spent more than half a lifetime in uncivilized Africa, had deemed could possibly exist.

From Dublin we made an excursion to Springfield, the place where most of my childhood had been passed. It is situated close to the Scalp, which is on the border-line between Dublin and Wicklow. The house was kept as an annexe to the Fitzwilliam Sports Club, of which the secretary was good enough to arrange that I was to be regarded as an honorary member during my stay.

It was a strange experience to find the trees from which I had gathered hazel-nuts so many years ago still vigorous, to find the streams in which I used to "tickle" trout in early boyhood still cheerfully chattering over the same rounded stones, to watch individuals of the thirty-third generation, descended from butterflies I used to know, hovering around the blossoms of an ancient laburnum whose boughs had often bent to my childish weight. The very beds of wild strawberries, scattered

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over what in South Africa we would call the "veld," were still bearing plentifully under the regularly recurrent spell of early summer. There is a wonderful steadfastness in inanimate nature.

I next visited Killarney. The day before leaving Dublin I went to the inspector in charge at the railway station and told him that I wanted to break my journey at Goold's Cross Station, in the County Tipperary. I knew that all trains did not stop there. It was my intention to visit Cashel; to wander once more over the old cemetery on the Rock, where many of my kin lie buried. The inspector advised me to purchase a time-table. This I did, and the obliging official made a mark in the margin of the page opposite the imprint indicating the particular train I was to be sure and catch.

As the train approached Goold's Cross we got our rugs, etc., strapped up, preparatory to alighting. But to my bewilderment we ran through the station without stopping. At the next halt I sought the guard and angrily demanded an explanation.

"Sure ye've come be the wrong thrain," he said.

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I produced the time-table with the indicating mark made by the Dublin inspector.

"Oh, begor," he rejoined, "that was althered a fortnight ago."

This incident struck me as being very typical of the Irish—in Ireland. But it would be by no means typical of the Irishman abroad, who is essentially a man of action, and is as keen and alert as any one else in matters of business. But when swarming begins, either from a beehive or from a country, it is mainly the workers who go forth and the drones who remain behind. I have been told that within the last few years things in Ireland have somewhat improved, but in 1898 the seal of hopelessness seemed to be set on almost every countenance there.

Killarney I had never previously seen. Its scenery has often been described by abler pens than mine, so I will not enlarge on the subject except to say that its loveliness exceeded my expectations. But the people disappointed me. The lanes were full of loafing youngsters smoking cheap cigarettes and hungrily toutng for tips. In driving about we were continually accosted by women who, with a show of mystery, produced dingy bottles of whiskey and cans of

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milk. The former, they assured us, "had never paid duty"; it was, naturally, the veritable "potheen" made illicitly in some secret still for which the police had been long but vainly seeking. But the samples I tasted were, of course, of the ordinary brand manufactured by Jameson.

After our Irish trip we spent a few weeks on the Continent. Then we embarked for South Africa in the intermediate steamer *Greek*. The voyage was notable in one respect: we passed the tropical zone without experiencing a single hot day.

CHAPTER XVII

Nqamakwe once more—Disadvantages of territorial service
—Uncongenial society—Safety among savages—Natives
easily ruled—Tale of a talking pig—The Native Question
insoluble—The future's menacing problems—An inexplicable
occurrence—Farewell to the territories—Peace or
war—The storm bursts—*Au revoir*.

I RETURNED to South Africa, after an absence of about seven months, in the (Southern) spring of 1898. My health was completely restored, so I once more took up my official duties at Nqamakwe. The effect of the ravages of the rinderpest was still apparent in the recalcitrant locations; nevertheless the people were replacing their lost cattle by others purchased in the Colony. The inhabitants of the surrounding districts had still to depend on teams from Nqamakwe to do their ploughing. Those who could not afford to hire were put to strange shifts. I saw in the district of Idutywa a mule and an old cow yoked together in the plough. The children

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in those districts suffered sadly from want of milk. This, when fermented in calabashes, is the Native child's staple food.

Soon after my return I applied for a transfer back to the Colony. I was loath to leave the Fingos, but there were various reasons prompting me towards an endeavour to return to more settled parts. These were mainly connected with my children, who were quite isolated. I have noticed that men who spend their childhood among Natives have, when they come as adults to dwell among Europeans, largely lost the gregarious instinct, and are consequently apt to be strangers to their kind.

Another thing was this: A magistrate in the Native Territories feels the administrative control which the Chief Magistrate exercises over him very irksome. Again, the constitution of the Court of Appeal was most unsatisfactory. Not alone were its members untrained in the important item of law, but the different decisions they gave on certain points contradicted each other hopelessly. It was somewhat annoying to have one's decisions upset when one knew them to be right. Precedents were no guide, for the personnel of the court was continually changing, and the

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members sitting on any given occasion scouted the idea of being bound by any prior decision. When I first went to the Transkei I began to compile a digest with the object of showing the rulings on the various points which had been raised on appeal, but I soon found that, except possibly for purposes of a comic paper, such a compilation would have been of no use whatsoever.

Moreover, such Europeans as were within reach were not congenial. With several of the more prominent local traders I was at open war over the liquor traffic. The only others with whom one could associate were the members of the Scotch community at Blythswood. These were not companionable; when not engaged in quarrelling among themselves they were always looking for imaginary slights, and were morbidly sensitive. I made an impressionist sketch of the Blythswood community in a story called "Chicken Wings," which formed an item in a volume* I published some years later, so I will not here repeat the process.

I lived six years in the Native Territories, surrounded by so-called savages—men of wrath

* "By Veld and Kopje."

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—heathen and unredeemed. Yet during the whole of that time I never locked a door or barred a window at night—except once or twice when I heard that there were loafing Europeans in the neighbourhood. I was told of a hunter who left his wagons, which contained much valuable property, with a Native chief near the Upper Letaba. He repeated to the chief his desire to have a strong guard kept on the property, but the chief made reply—

“There is nothing whatever to be uneasy about; you are the only white man anywhere in the neighbourhood.”

The Natives are, or were, the easiest people in the world to govern. I managed forty thousand of them for four years with the assistance of seven policemen, the latter locally enrolled—selected from among the people themselves. There was nothing singular in this; every other magistrate did more or less the same. In managing Natives the prime necessity is sympathy; if one has that it matters little what else one lacks. They were a people full of contradictions when regarded from our ethical standpoint. Some of their practices, which have an immemorial origin, would

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have been regarded as hideously depraved among Europeans—and quite rightly so. But among the Natives such practices were no evidence of degradation.

It was a strange experience to observe the course of an idea sweeping like a gale through the brains of these people. It was of no use endeavouring to check this, no matter how palpably fallacious it might have been. I will give an instance showing what I mean.

In Bomvanaland cattle do not thrive well, on account of the abundance of ticks, but the people kept large numbers of pigs. These were a source of considerable profit; regularly, every year traders used to come in and purchase droves of them.

One harvesting season all the inhabitants of a certain kraal, with the exception of an old man who had been ill for a long time, were down in the fields gathering in the grain. When they returned in the evening this man was in delirium. He said that while the others were away a pig had come to the hut, stood upright on its hind legs, and told him that he would die on the following day. The man died next morning, and the rumour of the pig's message got abroad. At once the tribe

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was seized with terror; they turned out and slaughtered every pig that could be found. For days the slaughter went on, for some of the herds were running half-wild in the forests.

The Native Question, that thorny burr which so many have taken up hurriedly and dropped incontinently, will, in my reasoned opinion, never be solved. From its nature, it cannot be—unless some at present unthinkable change comes over human nature.

On this subject I will venture to quote from one of my own Blue Book reports; it was written in 1899:—

“The philosophic administrator of a Native district may draw comfort from the reflection that in the more difficult future other hands than his will hold the plough. The problems ahead almost make one afraid to think. When one considers the tremendous increase of population and remembers that there is no room for expansion in any direction, the prospect looks dark indeed. What will become of these inarticulate myriads, whose standard of righteousness we are so rapidly destroying, and to whom our standard of righteousness is unintelligible?

“How long will they hearken to our half-

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understood speech? Shall we ever bridge the gulf that lies between our understanding and theirs?

“How shall he clear himself, how reach
Your bar, or weighed defence prefer?
A brother hedged with alien speech
And lacking all interpreter.

“These and other questions we will have to answer—and there are apt to be serious consequences if one answers sphinx-riddles otherwise than correctly.”

Before taking leave of Nqamakwe I should like to relate a most inexplicable occurrence—one of those things which tend to prevent even the most hard-headed from wholly discarding superstition.

Below the Residency garden, and about a hundred yards from the house, was a field of wheat. It happened to be the only one in the neighbourhood; thus, when the grain began to ripen birds flocked from all around in myriads, and began to devour it. I engaged the services of a little Native girl; she used to walk about all day long in the field, beating an empty paraffin tin with a stick. This was at first effective in scaring away the birds, but they only retired to the nearest

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trees, and as soon as ever the beating of the tin ceased they would flock back. Then I gave my Native groom my shot-gun, and directed him to go down to the field every quarter of an hour or so and fire at the marauders. Even the shooting to a great extent lost its effect after a week or so. More and more the birds flocked in—so much so that I began to despair of saving any of the crop.

One day I went out for a drive. A policeman came galloping after me with the sad news that the little girl had been shot dead. I returned at once and found the body of the poor child lying in a strawberry patch at the edge of the field. The groom had shot her by accident. *But there was not a single bird to be seen in the vicinity of the field.*

For three full days the birds kept away; in the afternoon of the fourth some of them returned. Within two days more the birds were as thick as ever. There was no change in the weather. It was quite impossible to account for the birds' absence. I have always regarded this as one of the most inexplicable occurrences within the range of my experience.

Mr. Schreiner was at this time Prime

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Minister. He very kindly arranged for my transfer. As the station to which I had been nominated was not yet vacant, he instructed me to proceed to Cape Town and there undertake some special work in his office.

So I sold off my belongings and bade a sad farewell to the people among whom I had spent such a strenuous time. The five months during which the rinderpest agony lasted had added quite five years to my age. Yet I have never regretted the experience. It taught me a great deal about human nature—that strange tangle of briers, on the twigs of which occasional blossoms and less occasional fruit appear at unexpected seasons. The flowers fade, the fruit often takes blight or rots, or else is consumed by the wasteful fowls of the air. And while the briers extend their tangle more and more, their thorns lose nothing in the matter of lethal sharpness.

It was at a fateful time that I reached Cape Town. The Bloemfontein Conference had come to its abortive end. The Spirits of Peace and War seemed to be contending in the air above our heads. We hoped and hoped—at least some of us did—that the Furies would not be let loose. Sometimes it

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seemed as though the horrid possibility would recede, but each time the clouds returned they looked more menacing.

I well remember lunching with Mr. Schreiner at an Adderley Street café on a day when, to the superficial observer, the sky appeared to be clearing. Mr. Schreiner, who looked more than ordinarily careworn, shocked me by saying that what were regarded as hopeful indications were fallacious—that war was practically certain. Three days afterwards the storm burst.

I was to a certain extent behind the scenes in the preliminary acts of the drama. Some day I hope to tell something of that war—from its beginning to its end. This telling will be included in yet another volume of my reminiscences.

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